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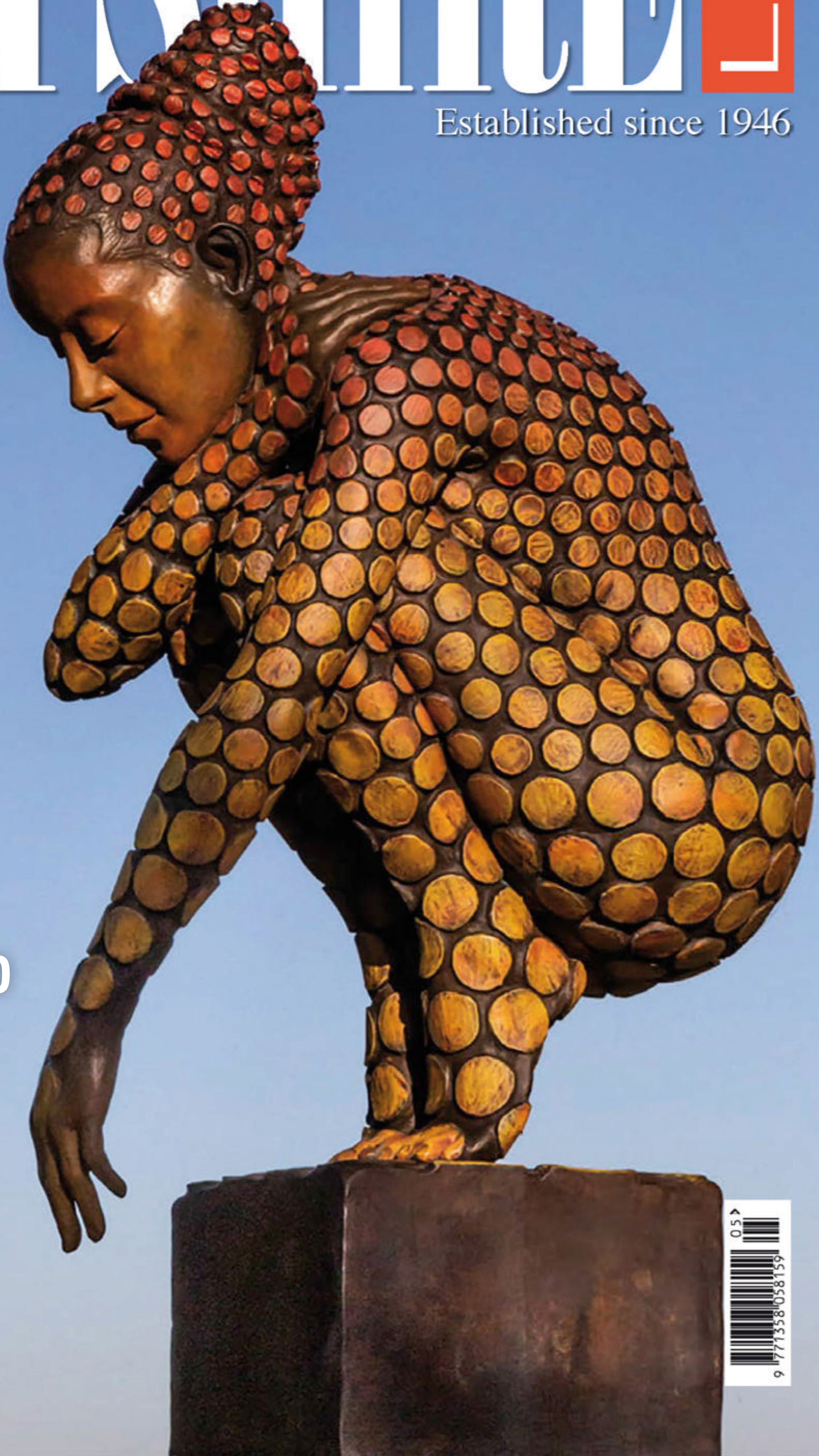

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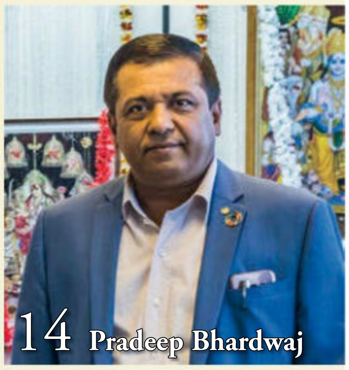
CONTENTS

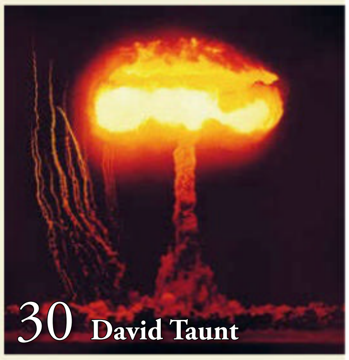
May 2023


14 Pradeep Bhardwaj

18 Patricia Low

24 Talos Gallery

WILTSHIRE LIFE
AWARDS 2023
ependent Retailer
of the Year
orating Farm/Village Shop
2nd Place
The Cake Tin
Malmesbury
26 The Cake Tin


30 David Taunt

36 Style with flowers

38 Kin House

Staff
Editor-in-Chief/Publisher: Mark Allen
Editor: Georgie Green
01722 717025
editor-wl@markallengroup.com
Publishing Director: Jane Kennedy
01722 717018
jane.kennedy@markallengroup.com
Circulation Director: Sally Boettcher
sally.boettcher@markallengroup.com
Subscription Manager: Bethany Foy
Page Design: Mary Holmes
Advert Design: Dan Bevan
Production Manager: Carolyn Allen
Production Director: Richard Hamshere
Managing Director: Paul Geoghegan
Chief Executive Officer: Ben Allen
Contributors
Grant Berry, Sophie Butcher,
Gary Lawrence, Mary-Vere Parr,
Clarissa Reilly, Sarah Williamson-Jones

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FEATURES

My Wiltshire: Katie Vigar 12
The mayor of Bradford on Avon explains why she made the town her home

In conversation with Pradeep Bhardwaj 14
The new High Sheriff making history in the county

Art: Patricia Low 18
Internationally renowned ceramicist inspired by the natural world

The Arts: Devizes Arts Festival 22
Discover the stars who will be taking part in this year's festival

Talos Art Gallery Summer Exhibition 24
The gallery prepares for an exciting new collection of sculpture and paintings.

Women in business: Victoria Parry 26
The Malmesbury banker turned baker who has made a business of her passion

Issues that matter: David Taunt 30
The naval veteran from Blunsdon who survived the horrors of nuclear testing

HOMES & GARDENS

Digger & Mojo: Dress to impress 34
How to style your home when putting it on the sale or rental market

Top 5 blooming good ways to brighten a room 36
Pod & Pip on how to create a welcome by styling with plants and flowers

The transformation of Kin House 38
The dilapitated house returned to its former glory is now ready to party

Garden designer: Tania Compton 42
Combining wildness and formality in her glorious Tisbury garden

National Garden Scheme Open Gardens 46
Private gardens in the county opening to visitors this month

The *Wiltshire Life* Awards 2023: Celebrating excellence 58
Find out more about the exceptional finalists and winners

REGULARS

Moonraker 4
Calendar 6
Around the County 8
Wiltshire Scene 10
Food and drink 100
The gardening year 104
Recommended reads 106

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Cover: Jonathan Hateley - Sunset
Image: Graham Dash

Sharing a moment in our history

Highworth
Cricklade
Malmesbury
Swindon
Royal Wootton Bassett
Chippenham
Calne
Corsham
Marlborough
Bradford on Avon
Melksham
Devizes
Trowbridge
Westbury
Ludgershall
Tidworth
Warminster
Amesbury
Mere
Wilton
Salisbury

As we prepare to witness The King's Coronation, Georgie Green says the county is ready to mark it in style.

IT IS going to be a busy and an historic month - for many of us witnessing a coronation for the first time.

When Queen Elizabeth II was crowned on June 2, 1953, the BBC televised the service, this was the first coverage of a coronation in the United Kingdom. It was a breakthrough in the history of broadcasting.

For most people, it was the first time they had watched an event on television. Friends and family gathered in packed sitting rooms and in most instances, it was a case of standing room only around the very small black and white screen.

In 1953, the population in the UK was around 36 million and 27 million people watched the coronation ceremony on television and almost 11 million listened to the event on the radio.

Now 70 years on we can witness this historic event on television once again, but this time in colour on almost cinematic style screens. We can also watch on a computer, a mobile phone or celebrate with others in public spaces.

In Corsham at the Pound Arts Centre they are going to live-stream the event complete with afternoon tea. There are also live streams at the Parade Cinema in Marlborough, the Market Place in Devizes, the Recreation Ground in Calne to name but a few.

At Salisbury Cathedral they are planning a whole host of events from crown and bunting making activities in advance of the day, through to showing the ceremony on a large screen in the nave, with two further screens in the north and south transepts followed by a jolly old shindig on the West Lawn. Website details can be found in our calendar on page six.

In Trowbridge, Swindon and Malmesbury there are all sorts of activities to get involved with to mark the occasion from live screenings to picnics in parks both on the day and on the Sunday. The Visit Wiltshire website is a good place to discover what is happening across the county www.visitwiltshire.co.uk/whats-on

Following The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, we shared so many fabulous images of how the county celebrated the event – including photographs from Big Jubilee Lunches. Who knew there were so many variations of a Coronation Chicken? I loved the delicious Platinum Jubilee Pudding – full of lemon and amaretti that was created for the event, which was made by a friend in Swallowcliffe and joyfully shared on the day.

Looking ahead to The King's Coronation Big Lunch, there is a wealth of information on the following website: https://coronation.gov.uk

There are recipes for lunch parties, including a fabulous trifle – this one it is strawberry and ginger. It looks far simpler to make than the Jubilee version – you can find it on page 100, but when I make it, I'm not sure if I want to share it with anyone – I could simply eat the lot…

Since the first publication in 1946, *Wiltshire Life* has shared stories and images of historic events that have taken place here in the county.

This magazine is published ahead of the Coronation on May 6, so we will include how the county has celebrated in a future issue – please do send in your images or let us know how you recognised the event.

We will include as many as possible in the pages of our coronation celebratory souvenir issue of the magazine. The easiest way to contact us is via email: editor-wl@markallengroup.com

Good luck to everyone who is putting up a gazebo, lighting a barbeque and sticking down paper plates with Blutack.

Enjoy the feasting and festivities – God Save The King! WL

KING CHARLES III • CORONATION • 6TH MAY 2023

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5 PLACES FOR A BREATHTAKING WINTER WALK
TREND TO RE-MEND THE RISE OF THE REPAIR CAF
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Take a walk AROUND EAST KNOYLE THE BIRTHPLACE OF CHRISTOPHER WREN
ECO-ENTREPRENEUR ON CREATING HOME FACTORIES
WOMEN'S FOOTBALL GROWING SUPPORT FOR THE BEAUTIFUL GAME
Salisbury's Dogs Trust appeals for canine carers
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Activities for the merry month of May

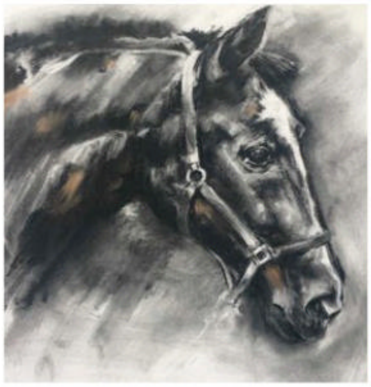
From live-screenings of The King's Coronation to theatre and drawing live horses

1st-7th

SWINDON FESTIVAL OF LITERATURE
VARIOUS LOCATIONS
From authors, acrobats and musicians, to talks, readings and performances – the festival has something for all the family.
swindonfestivalofliterature.co.uk

6th

CORONATION LIVE SCREENING
SALISBURY CATHEDRAL
Watch the Coronation live and then party with Swing Unlimited Big Band afterwards. and dancing on the lawn.
salisburycathedral.org.uk



13th

LIVE HORSE DRAWING WORKSHOP
CHESTNUT YARD STUDIOS, SUTTON MANDEVILLE, SP3 5NH
A dynamic drawing workshop studying a living, breathing horse with artist Skye Holland.
skyeholland.com/livehorsedrawing

6th

CORONATION DAY LIVE SCREENING
THE POUND, CORSHAM
Get family and friends together to enjoy ceremony whilst enjoying afternoon tea.God Save the King!
poundarts.org.uk

19th

BOLLYWOOD BRASS BAND
WILTSHIRE MUSIC CENTRE, BRADFORD ON AVON
Twice nominated for *Songlines* World Music Awards they are one of the most colourful, joyful and exhilarating acts around.
wiltshiremusic.org.uk/whats-on

20th

THE HIGH SHERIFF OF WILTSHIRE CONCERT
CHRIST CHURCH, OLD TOWN, SWINDON, SN1 3HB
For Rotary Swindon Cares. Featuring Ten In A Bar with The JTPT Trust Concert Choir.
rotarynicky@nickyalberry.co.uk

27th-4th June

THE BIG LEGO® BRICK BUILD
STONEHENGE, SP4 7DE
Help build a LEGO® replica Stonehenge. This event is for children aged 4 plus. *https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/whats-on/lego-brick-build-stonehenge/*

24th-4th June

SALISBURY INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL
THE TEMPEST
CHURCHILL GARDENS, SALISBURY SP1 2HS
Stunning outdoor re-imagining of Shakespeare's fabulous tale.
wiltshirecreative.co.uk

Handing over the reins of your family business

AS A family business owner approaching retirement, it's easy to focus on preparing the next generation to take over and lose sight of the need to prepare yourself for what is a major life event.

When advising founders on their exit plans, it often strikes me how profound a change it is on a psychological level for someone to cede control of a business they have spent decades building.

In previous articles I have written about the importance of laying the groundwork for a successful transition to the next generation in a family business, and how we work with our clients over a period of years to help make this happen. This includes ensuring the son or daughter has gained the skills needed to step up to the top job, as well as gradually handing over relationships with key customers so the change of leadership feels like a natural evolution rather than an unsettling surprise to them.

The other side of the coin is preparing the incumbent generation to hand over the reins. Naturally, it can be hard to let go, and leaders of family businesses often worry that things will go wrong without their steadying hand on the tiller. While the urge to offer sage advice can be hard to resist, one person's well-meaning counsel is another person's interference. This can cause tensions which then spill over into familial relationships.

So what is the answer?

The muscle memory of getting up and running the show every day can be difficult to override, so having something enjoyable to do when you stop working is clearly important. Depending on your taste, playing golf, spending time with the grandchildren or building a matchstick model of Salisbury Cathedral may help in this regard, but the itch to check on the business is likely to resurface if you haven't made the psychological transition to being a retired entrepreneur.

My advice is to start thinking and talking about it early. Be open and honest and set some timeframes. Don't be frightened to admit that letting go might be a problem.

As business advisers, we aim to help clients with the human as well as the financial aspects of their exit planning. Sometimes there is also a role for professional coaching. We are used to thinking about coaching as a useful tool in developing the next generation of leaders, but coaching out the retiring owners can be as important as coaching in the new generation. An experienced business coach can help to work through some of the common psychological issues founders encounter, so they can feel comfortable letting go.

MEDIAPHOTOS

Above: Succession planning in a family business takes time.

People will often say they are looking forward to retirement because there are lots of things they want to do, but when you get to the cliff edge and look over it's scary. As the time approaches, business owners can be surprised by their own emotional reaction to things they have never really thought about, such as loss of status. If your identity is bound up with the business you have been running for many years, of course it can be daunting – as well as liberating – to realise that soon you will no longer be in that position.

This can manifest itself in looking for reasons why a transaction cannot complete as planned, throwing a last-minute spanner in the works to the frustration of the anointed successor. By recognising that letting go is difficult and addressing these issues honestly, perhaps with the aid of a coach, founders can avoid being ambushed by subconscious fears.

For those not ready to put their feet up, community work as a volunteer, charity trustee or local councillor can help with the process of reinvention as a former business owner. Putting your skills to good use in another context can be rewarding and refreshing.

Having worked hard all your life to build a family business, you want to be able to enjoy the fruits of your labour in retirement without looking over your shoulder wondering why your successor isn't doing things the way you would have done. WL

- *Paul Giessler is a partner at the Salisbury office of PKF Francis Clark. For more information, email paul.giessler@pkf-francisclark.co.uk or visit pkf-francisclark.co.uk*

Right: Paul Giessler, partner at PKF Francis Clark.

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AROUND THE COUNTY

Earl of Pembroke joins village celebrations

In January 2022 the village of Barford St Martin started to fundraise for a new playground. They recently celebrated an extraordinary feat of raising £80,000 in just eight months.

To celebrate this success the Earl of Pembroke joined village residents to cut the ribbon and declare the playground officially open for business.

The Earl said that this was an amazing achievement, and he was hugely impressed that the committee and village community had got together to raise such a substantial sum in such a very short time.

Morag Walker, Chair of the Barford Community Fund, said: "I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people, businesses, Barford parish council and the fantastic village community who came together to support our vision"

She also recognised that this could not have been achieved without the support of many grant giving organisations such as Barford's own grant-giving charity the Nicholson Trust, the Wiltshire Community Foundation, the Special Educational Needs Development fund and many more besides.

Now that they have completed the project, village residents are planning to raise funds to make space in an existing building in the village into a flexible community area. Fund-raising has now started which means that village residents will have a local community space for film shows, playgroups, attending talks, yoga classes and more.

The Earl of Pembroke cuts the ribbon to the new playground.

- *For more information, please contact: Morag Walker, chairperson, Barford St Martin Community Fund, Telephone: 07736 124097 or email: morag@moragwalkerpr.co.uk*

Classic cars on the run

On Sunday May 21, 100 classic cars will take to the county's roads for the Rotary Club's 7th Annual Calne Classic Car Run.

Drivers will meet up and drive off from Calne Leisure Centre car park. Calne Lions will provide breakfast butties as they set off. Cars can be spotted along the 70 mile route as they pass through the beautiful Wiltshire countryside and over Salisbury Plain to Southern Quarter of Amesbury, finishing at Five Zero's state-of-the-art Supercar Barn at Holt.

Further support on the day will be provided by Rotarians and a great team of volunteers, making the event a true community effort.

The car run features VIP Teddy Bears and much-loved dogs in some of the cars.

The proceeds will go to Julia's House the Wiltshire & Dorset Children's Hospices, and to other Rotary charities.

The event is still looking for more drivers and Kate Tompkins of the Rotary Club of Chippenham said "If you have a classic car, bike or other vehicle come and join us for a great day out and to raise money for some great causes".

- *For further details: www.chippenhamrotary.org, or by email calnerotaryclassicrun@gmail.com*

DIY SOS star declares shop open for business

BBC presenter Nick Knowles cut the ribbon to officially open the new Blunsdon village shop.

The shop,which is run by volunteers, has been re-sited at the heart of the new 70-home Hayfield Wood development. Ian Jankinson from Blunsdon Parish Council said: "The shop has been at the heart of Blunsdon village life for almost two decades and has become a vital community asset. We're delighted with the new shop and, with it also now housing a café, it's set to be even more at the heart of our community."

Credit unions merge to form Acorn Bank

Wiltshire and Swindon Credit Union (WASCU) says a merger with two credit unions and a rebrand as Acorn Community Bank will allow it to offer an even better service for members.

WASCU, which has 4,000 members, is joining forces with Clivey Credit Union in Swindon, which has 600 members, and Swan Community Bank in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire to form Acorn Community Bank.

Credit unions, owned by their members and run on their behalf, provide affordable loans for people unable to get credit elsewhere to prevent them from going to payday loan companies or loan sharks.

Chair Nick Gallop said: "The merger will make it even more responsive to members' needs". The community bank, which was recently voted Community Group of the Year at the *Wiltshire Life* awards, will still be based in Cavendish Square, Swindon.

Mr Gallop said the name change reflects a new focus on encouraging savings. "We will continue to offer the same high level of service that earned WASCU the Best Credit Union (South) award in financial website Smart Money People's 2022 Consumer Credit Awards."

"We thought long and hard about the new name and decided that one of the things we are supposed to do is encourage savings, which really isn't in the old 'credit union' title. The things the Acorn name stands for are growing, saving and a focus on the future."

- *acorncommunitybank.co.uk*

ACORN
Community Bank
ACORN

Acorn Community Bank's member services manager Gemma Sadler, left, operations manager Bridget Shone, general manager Clive Henley, marketing and communications officer Phoebe Fernandes and loans officer Amy Haines

Everything Stops For Tea

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Gill Sharpe is creating a book of recipes and anecdotes for SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity. In addition to a selection of historic recipes, Gill is asking for contributions from the public to go into print.

The book, *Everything Stops For Tea* was inspired by a sheaf of historic papers dating back to 1958, which document a series of fundraising 'teas' which were organised by a Mrs Curry at the annual SSAFA Bazaar.

Gill says: "I was given these very old documents by a colleague, and I was inspired to somehow pay tribute to Mrs Curry and her enthusiastic team who had organised such wonderful events and written everything down so faithfully, even down to the menu covers, which are drawn beautifully.

"I thought I could make this into a book and add some more contemporary recipes in too; a sort-of then and now of tea-time."

Gill who has been a SSAFA volunteer for 25 years says: "All the proceeds will go to the charity. What I really need now are some more recipes. Perhaps something historic, or linked to the Wiltshire area, or just your favourite thing to have at high tea."

- *If you would like to help out a historic charity and see your recipe in print, send your contribution to: gill.sharpe@wiltshire.ssafa.org.uk*

WAG finds a new place to call home in Warminster

Warminster Action Group (WAG) has moved to larger premises in Wilson and Kennard Yard.

The new 'WAG House' provides a home from home safe space for the community to enjoy company and meet new friends. It is run by friendly volunteers who greet visitors with a smile, homemade cake or biscuits and a cup of tea. The new space has a kitchen and toilet as well as a separate room for activities, such as games, arts, knitting and sewing.

For those who find a group setting a bit daunting, WAG can arrange for them to come and meet just one or two of the volunteers to begin with. WAG still offers a shopping and prescription delivery service to those with mobility issues, illness or anyone who has come out of hospital and may need a little help. They also offer a befriending service for those experiencing isolation or loneliness.

Annie Davis, chair and founder of WAG said: "I would like to thank everyone who attended our launch event. Due to the cost-of-living crisis there has been a dramatic increase in the requirement for services. Having larger premises means we can make a positive difference to the lives of more local people when they need it."

- *If you would be like to know more about the services WAG offers,please visit www.warminsteractiongroup.co.uk or call 01985 250081.*

The Mayor of Warminster and WAG volunteers at their new home.

WILTSHIRE SCENE

Princess braves the Plain’s winter chills

ON INTERNATIONAL Women’s Day, The Princess of Wales paid a visit to Salisbury Plain, in her new role as the Royal Colonel of the Irish Guards.

In freezing temperatures and a snow blizzard, the princess met with army personnel and watched several training sessions, she also got hands on experience when she was thrust into the midst of a casualty simulation exercise, complete with gunfire, fake blood, and realistic fake wounds, Her Royal Highness was shown how to carry out battlefield casualty drills to deliver care to injured soldiers in the heat of battle.

Irish Guards Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel James Aldridge said: “We are delighted to welcome HRH the Princess of Wales into the Irish Guards family.

“It was a dramatic introduction to the regiment and the guardsmen were extremely impressed with how their new Royal Colonel had been so genuinely interested and willing to get ‘hands on’ from the start.”

The princess met men and women from a range of ranks, all of whom were keen to make her feel welcome in her new role as head of the Regimental family.

The Princess of Wales on Salisbury Plain.

The new Royal Colonel meets with members of the Irish Guards.

The Princess of Wales took over the role as Royal Colonel from her husband.

The new colonel is briefed on training exercises.

The princess took part in a battlefield casualty drill.

Being shown a weapons system used by troops.

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ST FRANCIS
SCHOOL

Katie Vigar

The mayor of Bradford on Avon explains why moving to this part of the county was the perfect choice for all the family.

I WAS BORN in Surrey, grew up in Suffolk, went to university in Lancaster and lived and worked in London for 10 years. So why Wiltshire?

When starting a family and keen to move from London, my husband and I were looking for a small town community with access to countryside, proximity to a city and with London possible as a day trip. Perhaps we were asking rather a lot but Wiltshire – Bradford on Avon, in particular – fitted the bill.

Visiting Bath, but knowing we preferred somewhere smaller, we looked at a map and saw a small town with a river and a canal, which seemed worth exploring. We drove into Bradford on Avon and within minutes spotted signs to the Wiltshire Music Centre, the swimming pool and the railway station. So much seemed to be on offer; we both instantly felt that the town was right for us.

We found a weaver's cottage on Middle Rank, halfway down the hillside, and within a few months, with our first child due three weeks later, we moved in.

That was June 1998 – the Wiltshire welcome from our new neighbours couldn't have been warmer - and 25 years on, we couldn't be happier with our choice. It was an added pleasure when a few months after arriving we discovered that my husband's father's family in previous generations had lived a few doors away. We weren't complete outsiders after all!

Although we benefit from the train access to Bath, we've always been appreciative of Bradford's place in Wiltshire. Like other towns of west Wiltshire, it has a proud industrial heritage and remains a working historic town with new industries as well as many self-employed people in a range of sectors. Weavers' cottages are once again the home-based workplace for many.

Through various organisations, we were able to build connections and friendships across West Wiltshire. Our next-door neighbour in Middle Rank was involved in West Wiltshire Mencap and roped my husband in as president for several years. I joined the committee of the Bradford, Trowbridge and Melksham National Childbirth Trust. In 2001, my husband stood for parliament in the then Westbury Constituency which included Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge, Warminster and Westbury. He wasn't elected, but the experience took us to places we may not otherwise have seen, the smallest villages and also the larger estates in some of the towns. It's a hugely varied county and, for me, that's one of its strengths – that its communities bring together the experiences of people who've been here for generations with those who have arrived more recently.

Over the 25 years we've lived in Bradford, we've moved home a few times, but it's always been possible to be walking in beautiful countryside within minutes. And as we've explored other parts of the county, we've loved the larger agricultural landscapes and big skies elsewhere.

A particularly special part of our experience here has been the opportunity for our children to attend excellent schools that they could walk to, growing up firmly as part of the community in which they live. I helped on the parent associations at their primary and secondary school and was a school governor. These opportunities to get involved in their schools and the community that support them has been a real joy.

In May 2021 I became a town councillor and for the last year have had the honour of being mayor. This role has again taken me to communities across Wiltshire as I have represented Bradford on Avon at civic services, awards ceremonies and other events in towns around the area. It's been a heartening and informative experience to see how different places have coped with difficult times such as the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, and how they have marked celebrations such as the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee and now the coronation.

It was a tremendous honour to read the proclamation of the new King. I remember the occasion in 2003 when the now King, then the Prince of Wales, arrived in Bradford to open our newly restored 13th century West Barn. Twenty years on, just recently, it was another memorable moment, joined by Deputy Lieutenant of Wiltshire, David Couzens, as we planted a tree just beside the barn in memory of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

The tree was one of thousands planted in the town recently thanks to a grant to the town council from the Forestry Commission. Bradford on Avon residents are very committed to practical environmental action and at this time of great threat to our environment, there is huge appeal in the idea of a neighbourhood where people can access all they need within a 15-minute walk, cycle or bus ride. Bradford on Avon comes close to this with its schools, its recreational and cultural life, its independent shops and its transport links. The 15-minute neighbourhood concept had not been articulated in 1998 when we moved here, but it was what we saw. I hope to continue to be involved in realising the vision of such sustainable towns and in helping this part of Wiltshire to thrive. WL

Pradeep Bhardwaj

Pradeep Bhardwaj is the first person from an ethnic community to become High Sheriff of Wiltshire. He told Gary Lawrence about the challenges that brought him to the role and the opportunities it presents.

PRADEEP'S LIFE has been a life of firsts. He played a pivotal role in many of India's milestones in modern communications, he set up Swindon's first public Hindu worship – and its first Hindu temple – and now he has become Wiltshire's first ethnic minority High Sheriff.

The 55-year-old is choosing the theme of inclusion to characterise his year, the power of which he says is amply demonstrated by the fact he took his oath of office at the end of March. "The very fact I was standing there as the first person from an ethnic community, the first Indian, the first Hindu, to be Wiltshire's High Sheriff is a testimony to all the good things we have in this country," he says.

The 55-year-old father of two is determined to use the role as a means of shining a light on the many and varied ethnic communities across the county but also to bring them together. "We have a lot of communities who are doing some wonderful things," he says. "I can be a bridge between the communities, so they are working together rather than in isolation – and also more broadly, a bridge between the public, private and third sector."

He has been in Swindon for 23 years and has seen the town's, and the county's, dynamic growth in new cultures through communities such as the Turkish, Polish and Romanian communities, not to mention those from the sub-continent, and believes they have a huge amount to offer.

It is fitting that he sees better communication as a means to better understanding because communications is what brought him here in the first place.

He grew up in India's central state of Madhya Pradesh and after graduating with a degree in electronics and telecommunications engineering, he joined the state-owned Overseas Communications Services in 1991, just as the foundation for the country's digital revolution were being laid.

He was part of the team that introduced India's first public email service, India's first Electronic data interchange service, one of

Pradeep Bhardwaj in the new Swindon Hindu Temple. at Regent House.

A young Pradeep Bhardwaj working for the Indian government's Overseas Communications Services in 1991 and in the Seychelles 1997.

India's first digital international telephone exchanges and then, a little later, India's first public internet service. "When we launched the internet it was dial-up and very slow by today's standards but it was a very precious service and everybody was queuing up to get it," he recalls. "All the big hotels, companies, state authorities, politicians and the who's who of society, they all wanted to have the internet."

He was headhunted by Indian tech billionaire Sunil Bharti Mittal to expand his communications empire to the Seychelles, where he spent two years before moving to Melbourne in Australia working on a global satellite project for INMARSAT.

> 'When I came here there was no Hindu temple'

A year later he was seduced away to a job for AT&T, later known as Lucent, in a place he'd never heard of. "I decided to accept the offer from AT&T because they are world-renowned for their innovation and being the inventor of the mobile phone itself," he recalls.

"I hadn't even heard of Swindon at all. I was sat in the office in Melbourne and asked one of my Aussie colleagues 'have you heard of Swindon? What's it like?' he replied 'Sweden?'."

Having established he wasn't moving to Scandinavia he contacted friends of another colleague who lived in Swindon. "I managed to find out quite a lot, it was important that there was an Indian community there from a social point of view and for my wife Neetu," he says.

Soon after they arrived they made a discovery that was to dominate the major part of their lives. "When I came here there was no Hindu temple," he says. "It amazed, shocked and frustrated me that we had people who had been living in the town for up to 50 or 60 years with no place of worship available to them."

The absence of a focal point for a growing community, not just in Swindon but across the county and beyond, affected far more than just worship. "The religious benefit is a small part, there is a lot more to it than that," he says. "There is a danger of losing our culture, of people being left isolated."

Neetu set the ball rolling with a conversation about the need to set up a temple that soon rippled out to a wider circle of friends, colleagues and community figures.

But the challenge was not just in finding a location for a temple but creating one that was accepted and relevant to all strands of the Hindu faith.

Says Pradeep: "We wanted the temple to be very representative because India is very diverse. It wasn't just India, it was for the sub-continent and beyond – you have Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Mauritius."

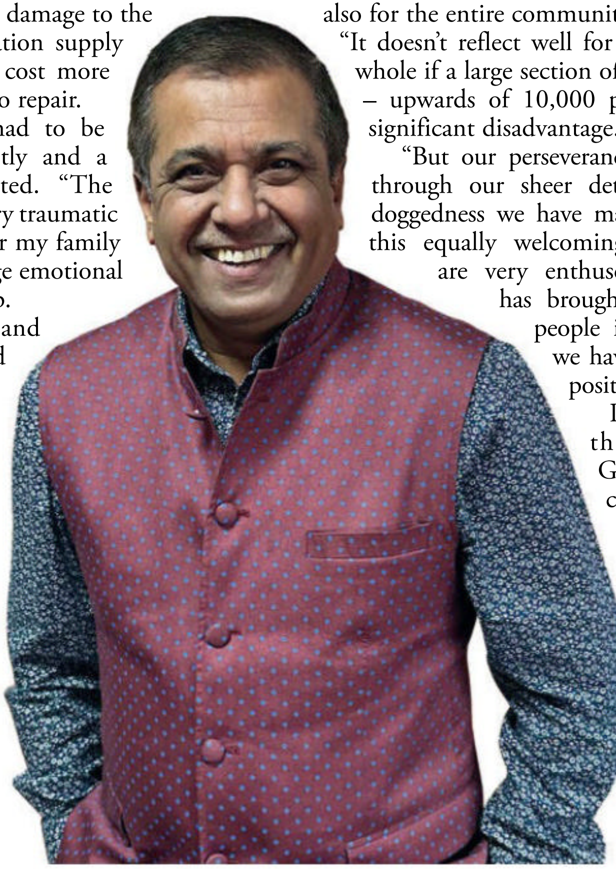
He vividly recalls hiring the Freshbrook Community Centre April 5, 2014, when the first public Hindu congregation assembled for worship in Swindon. Soon after, the fundraising and campaigning for a permanent temple began. "We made Park South Community Centre our regular home and on the fourth Sunday of each month we'd pack up two cars with folding tables, deities, pictures of Gods and Goddesses, food, mats to sit and worship material," he says. "It was a temple in a car."

Later that year the community formed the Swindon Hindu Temple Trust as a charity with a goal to build the county's first Hindu Temple. By 2016 it had secured a dilapidated, empty factory and warehouse in Cheney Manor as the venue. More than £100,000 went into its conversion, buying deities, wooden hand-carved altars and other items essential to worship.

The temple became exactly what Pradeep and Neetu had envisaged, a thriving community hub. "We started it to bring people together," says Pradeep. "The religious need was at the forefront but we knew there was a much larger social and cultural need also so the organisation had four arms – religious, social and community, cultural and charitable.

"Under each arm we organise different activities, obviously the worship but also cultural events such as hosting visiting artists and holding important community and wellbeing activities such as CPR, breast cancer and prostate cancer awareness workshops and blood donation camps." He fervently believes these community-led health outreaches can be far more effective than anything organised by the NHS.

In 2020 the pandemic locked down all worship and the temple was left empty end exposed. Seven break-ins resulted in thefts of valuable ceremonial items, vandalism and eventually critical damage to the electricity sub-station supply that would have cost more than £1 million to repair.



The temple had to be closed permanently and a new home located. "The break-ins were very traumatic and personally for my family it has taken a huge emotional toll," says Pradeep.

"The pain and anguish caused by the loss was comparable to, if not more, than losing someone in the family. It has caused a lot of mental health issues in the community too because it was one of the most vibrant social hubs in the town and suddenly it was taken away. Families had nowhere to go just at the time we had the backdrop of Covid and the lockdowns."

It took almost a year to find a new home, at Regent House in the centre of Swindon. More than 600 people attended the opening and so unexpectedly large was the turnout, three lots of food had to be sourced and prepared.

"That period from 2020 to mid-last year was a very difficult period personally but also for the entire community," says Pradeep. "It doesn't reflect well for the society as a whole if a large section of the community – upwards of 10,000 people – is at a significant disadvantage.

"But our perseverance prevailed and through our sheer determination and doggedness we have managed to create this equally welcoming place. People are very enthused now and it has brought a lot of new people into the fold so we have to look at the positives."

Pradeep joined the Carlyle Group as a communications strategist in 2005 and travels all over the world – he has racked up 50 countries so far but still ranks the Seychelles as his favourite – but now with the temple finally open he is focusing on a year to remember.

Traditionally it will be a year filled with visits ("oh my gosh, it is going to go quick, I've hardly started and I already have 30 dates in my diary") but he won't be a benign visitor and expects to challenge organisations to build a more diverse, equitable and inclusive culture.

"The good thing about the role of High Sheriff is that there is an expectation that everybody will do things in their own way, which is a good because that's how you express your vision, your thinking and bring your own touch to the role," he says.

"You have to be chosen on merit but I think it is quite significant that someone from an ethnic community has been chosen in this role. I am very fond of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and one of my favourites is number 10 of the 17 – the goal to reduce inequalities. That's a hard reality we have in today's society and I will be emphasising inequality, diversity and inclusion during my term.

"Everybody wants to contribute to the society, and we have to look at how we break down barriers for participation and give people the opportunity to do some wonderful things and give something back. That's one of the things I will be emphasising – to bring positive opportunities and outcomes."

As he embarks on his year he is aware that he is treading new ground for his community. "It's a feeling of immense gratitude and very humbling to say the least," he says. "It gives you time to reflect on the good things and be thankful you have this opportunity to bring about a positive change. It's also an opportunity to become a role model and inspire others." WL

The opening of Swindon's new temple attracted 600 people.

What is a High Sheriff?

The Office of High Sheriff dates back to Saxon times when the Shire Reeve was responsible to the king for the maintenance of law and order and collecting taxes.

It is an independent non-political Royal appointment for a single year and there are now 55 High Sheriffs in England and Wales.

The central elements of the role are supporting the Crown and the judiciary but they also support and encourage crime prevention agencies, the emergency services and the voluntary sector. Many also encourage crime reduction initiatives.

Many Sheriffs support community foundations and charities working with vulnerable and disadvantaged people by endorsing and raising the profile of their work. They receive no remuneration and no part of the expense of a High Sheriff's year falls on the public purse.

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Inspired by fin, fur, and feathers

Ceramicist Patricia Low's love for the natural world is clearly reflected in her creations, Mary-Vere Parr meets this internationally renowned artist in her south Wiltshire studio to find out more about her art and inspiration.

“IT STARTS with me having got fixated about some animal I've seen,” ceramicist Patricia Low explains as she shows me the meticulous drawings and watercolour studies in her studio in Ansty. “What a wealth of texture and goings-on every animal has. It's not just their elegance and sculptural feel, it's the fur, the feathers, the fins…”

The images that Patricia paints onto her large pots are all of these things - elegant, sculptural, textural. She has depicted a host of beasts from the exotic - crocodiles, rhinoceros, and sea turtles - to the familiar – the foxes, badgers and hares that inhabit Wiltshire's downland and its farm pigs, goats and ducks. And then come the creatures of the air – jackdaws, swifts, and owls - and of water – the otters, fishes, and frogs.

Creatures of all shapes and sizes, from a stag beetle to a swan, have graced the curves of Low's clay. She could fill an ark with her subjects. “I try and draw anything that catches my fancy or has resonance,” she says. “I like doing animals that have something very particular - the courage of the turtles, the journeys of the swifts, the legendary pike.” She draws from life where she can or from the pages of *Country Life* if she cannot find an animal in the flesh. “It's all about enchanted movement,” she says, “the fighting, the flying, the preening…”

A lifetime of drawing, painting and printmaking, learnt at art school in the 1960s and honed over the decades since, allows Patricia to capture that movement in painstaking detail. But how does she transfer a flat image onto a curved pot? It is not easy. “The curve of the pot distorts every line,” she says. But, using mukato projection, a mapping technique invented to create round globes, she has perfected the art.

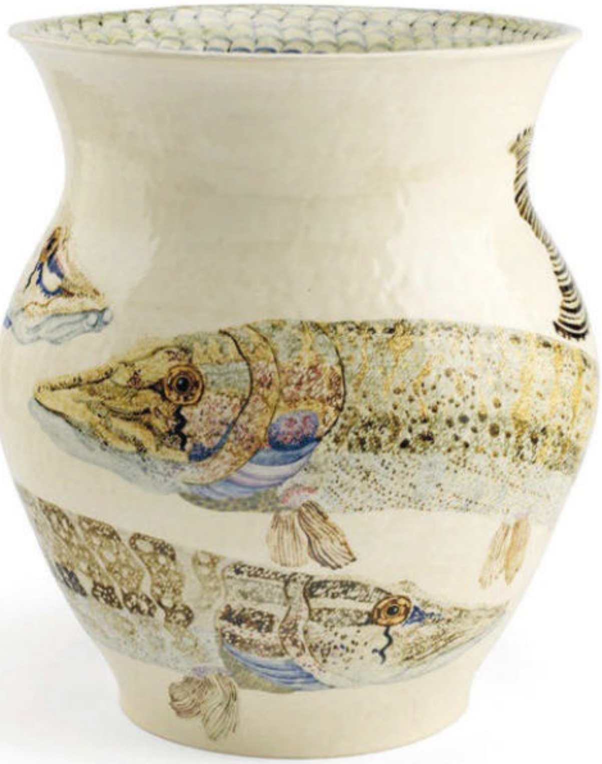
Patricia draws with paint onto the biscuit (fired but not glazed) clay before beginning to paint. She uses a tonal palette, sometimes just a single raw oxide in black or brown, sometimes her own secret palate of raw oxides – cobalt, iron manganese etc. Once fired, this produces a range of colours from rich earth tones to silvery blues which have the luminosity of watercolour. “It's like working in two mediums,” she says. “The one in front of you and the end result.”

Some liken the process to alchemy. For Low herself it is akin to printmaking from etchings. “I always go for things that are tremendously challenging,” she laughs. “Every time it is a nightmare of waiting to see.”

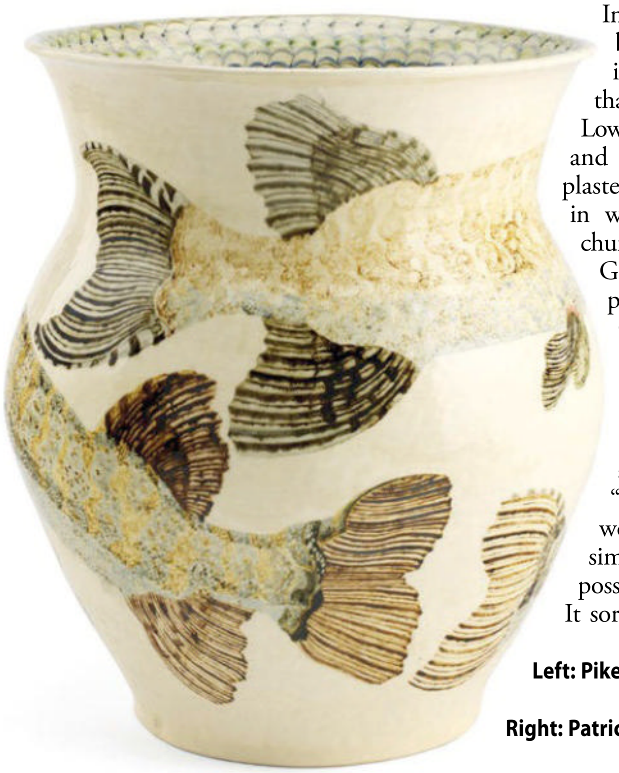
What emerges from Low's kiln are pots that are highly decorative both outside and inside. The fur or plumage of the animal creates the external pattern while inside contains what Low calls “its own interior world of related pattern”.

This desire to decorate originates in what friend and fellow Wiltshire painter David Inshaw calls Low's “own special brew” of artistic interests and influences. Some of the things that “make my heart sing,” Low says, are medieval tapestries and wall-hangings, moulded plasterwork, armorial carvings in wood and stone, effigies in churches, ancient font carving, George Stubbs, Etruscan pottery, cave paintings and Celtic jewellery.

Something as simple as a tiled floor can catch Low's fancy. She shows me one interior design based on a single piece of mistletoe: “You can see how my mind works,” she says. “It's very simple, you just explore the possibilities of that as a form. It sort of grows like Topsy”. The



Left: Pike Pot.



Right: Patricia Low at work in her studio.

‘The curve of the pot distorts every line’ sketch and pattern books that line her studio, alongside the pinch pots and tessellated pieces of clay she creates to experiment with pattern and colour, are as revealing of her art as the finished pieces.

Another inspiration Inshaw identifies is Low’s “deep love and understanding of nature, of down-to-earth farming country”. She has spent much of her life observing the wildlife of Wiltshire. For one favourite pot, she spent many hours drawing a Little Owl that lived at the bottom of her garden.

Indeed, the very shape of her pots echo the “bosomy” curve of the chalk downs where Low has lived most of her life. She recalls pony trapping from Marlborough to Avebury in a cart as a teenager, going to art college in Swindon, and enjoying “endless parties” when Georgina Von Etzdorf, Jonathan Docherty and Martin Simcock lived with her in Tidpit in the 1980s. Today she is settling into a cottage at Ansty having sold Folliotts, her “shambling, rambling farmhouse” and two-story barn studio in Cranborne Chase. The new house comes with two sheds to house her kilns, and a newly opened-up space for her studio. “I’ve painted everything pink and made it jolly,” she says.

But of course, woven into this landscape is the evidence of a much older history, of human occupation dating back 4,000 years. Aged 16, when Low visited Avebury she saw in the museum there Bronze Age thumb and Beaker pots: “I was deeply moved by them,” she recalls. “Years later, when I started making coil pots, they were my inspiration.”

Despite this early love affair with Beaker pots, Low eschewed it at art school in a period when “everything was thick and massive”. “I was a painter and printmaker and happy with what I was doing,” she explains. In the 1986, whilst staying with potter friend Joanna Still, she made a coil pot – she found her passion.

“Hand building for me was an epiphany,” she says. “Now I was making sculpture and painting three dimensional, figurative images on it. Thus, all my creative desires came together - to paint but also to make - an object and a narrative.”

Low hands me a large pot some 60cm tall and I am amazed at its lightness. “I sort of knew immediately that they [the pots] were going to be very thin and I was going to paint them and that was that,” she says.

She had also found a new artistic freedom. “The lure of a pot is irresistible,” Low adds. “It’s a void filled with… an endless conjecture.

“My thinking changed and, rather than be constrained by the teaching at art school or trying to follow other painters, I could do anything. Nobody was watching, I just wanted to go my own way and to discover what I could do. This is what fascinates me.”

Low taught herself empirically, her work continues to combine a sense of exploration with a meticulous attention to detail. Inshaw calls her approach “an obsessive, tenacious, determined, professional attitude – clay on clay, day after day, working the shape of the pot, defining the curve, working for a kind of perfection.”

It is indeed “unfashionably unhurried”. You can see each coil and carefully placed thumbprint in a Low pot which can take her 2-3 weeks to build and four months to paint as she slowly builds layer upon layer of pigment. “The trouble is there is life in between – children, houses…,” she smiles. “No man would say that but maybe we’re lucky not to be single-minded.”

There are many diverting stories along the way of Low’s career from braving wild boar in a forest in Devon (“pigs love being drawn!”) to the arrival at her studio, in a chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce, of theatre producer Cameron Macintosh’s Rhodesian Ridgeback. Macintosh had commissioned a pot, the dog duly posed to be drawn for it.

Many of Low’s pots are found in ‘nice houses’ around the county: Lord Margadale at Fonthill is a fan, but she has also been shown around the world: in London at The Fine Art Society, in Istanbul, Italy and in New York and across Europe.

Most recently, she created the Wessex Case installation in Salisbury Museum, showing her work alongside the Bronze Age Beaker pots that inspired her.

Sitting in Patricia Low’s sitting room while she kindly makes coffee, I am left to contemplate a favourite wild boar pot. Marvelling at the pattern of his fur, I feel what Inshaw describes: a powerful and yet fragile presence, a sense of history and association and, above all, what he calls quiddity, the essence of both animal and art. WL

Hare Pot.

Current exhibition

Patricia Low is taking part in this year’s Wylye Valley Art Trail, you can see her work at Furzelease Farm, Tisbury Row SP3 6RZ

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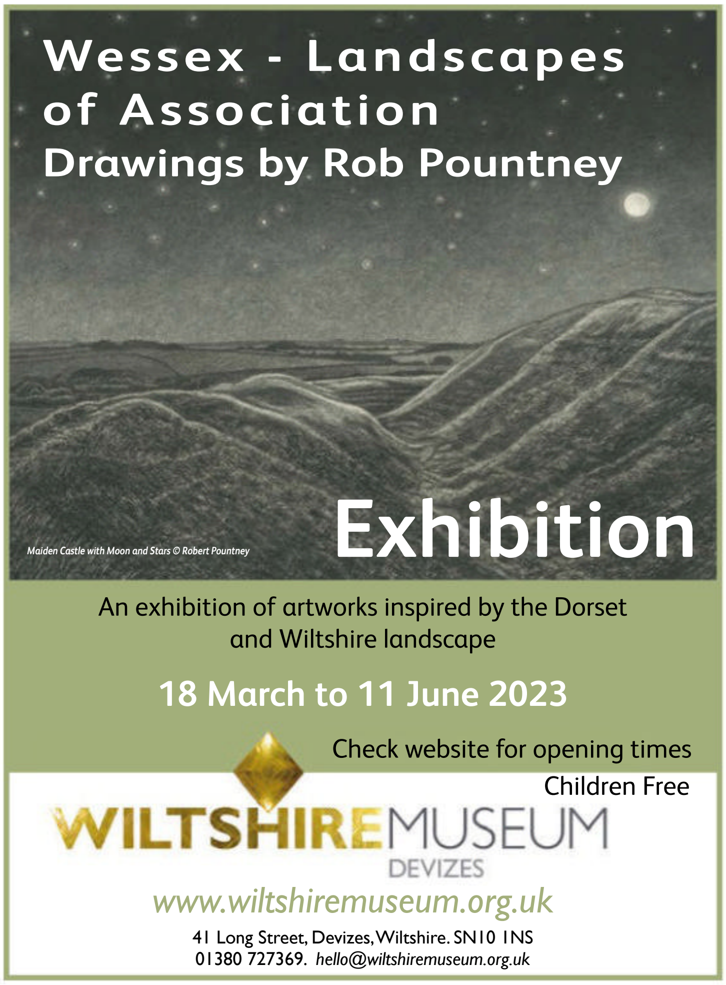

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Marcus Brigstocke is a major British comedy talent as writer, actor, presenter and performer. It's said he is heard on Radio 4 more frequently than the *Shipping Forecast.* Marcus is the master of satirical comedy and has proved to be blisteringly funny over a wide range of topics. His talent was noted early in 1996 when he won the BBC New Comedian Award at the Edinburgh Festival.

Clive Anderson is a barrister by training, but he is best known for being an award-winning and versatile, presenter and comedy writer. Winner of the British Comedy Award in 1991, Clive went on to front 10 series of his own show, on Channel 4 and four series of *Clive Anderson All Talk* on BBC 1.

Musical events include Dieci Corde, a cello and classical guitar duo who blend uniquely together; Kit Hawes (guitar, vocals) and Aaron Catlow (violin, vocals) explore the rich musical heritage of folk music from the British Isle; and the Aglica Trio whose music has been described as captivating, passionate, powerful and heartwarming.

For drama, *Jesus My Boy* performed by the Onarole Theatre is the story of Jesus seen through the eyes of Joseph, an ordinary and down-to-earth man and the superbly gifted actor and singer, Lucy Stevens tells the story of Gertrude Lawrence, one of Britain's brightest theatrical stars during the first half of the 20th century.

Talks include: Will Kirk the British furniture restorer primarily known for his work on BBC's phenomenally successful restoration programme *The Repair Shop.* Lois Pryce, author of three books talks about her solo adventures in far-flung lands; Polar adventurer and motivational speaker Sue Stockdale has spent her life exploring some of the world's most remote environments; Graham Short, the world's most talented living micro-artist. In her book *Elizabeth and Philip* historian Dr. Tessa Dunlop returns to Britain's most famous marriage 75 years after the landmark wedding and discovers not all is what it seems.

Musical events include: Noble Jacks, a rip-roaring Alt-Folk band with roof raising energy, whose warm electro-acoustic interactions fuse together a mixture of folky footstompin' rhythms and engaging lyricism; the Chris Ingham Trio revisit their acclaimed show *The Jazz Of Dudley Moore*; Christian Garrick & the Budapest Café Orchestra bring gypsy and folk flavoured music in their own fresh and surprising way; Tango Calor, one of the most exciting tango bands performing in the UK; and Malavita!, an eight-piece reggae latin funk powerhouse from Devon, finishes the festival in fine style.

- *For full details about all the events and to book tickets: www.devizesartsfestival.org.uk*

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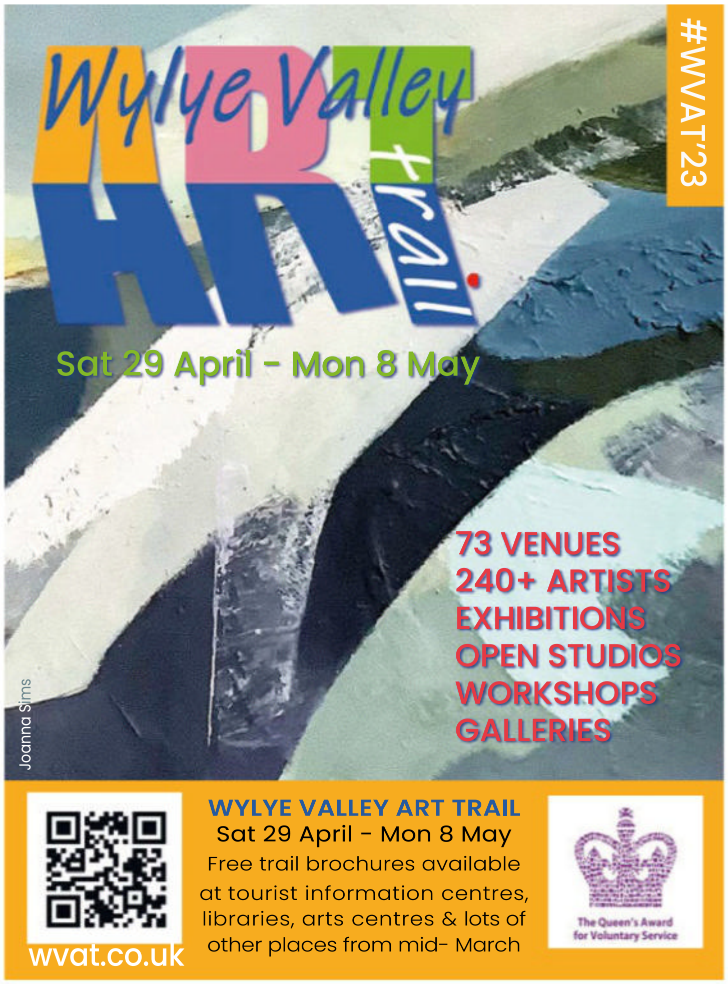

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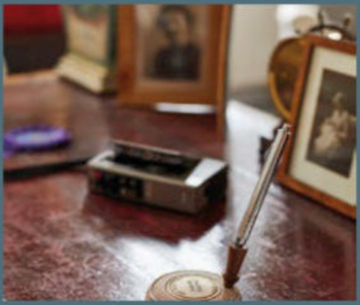

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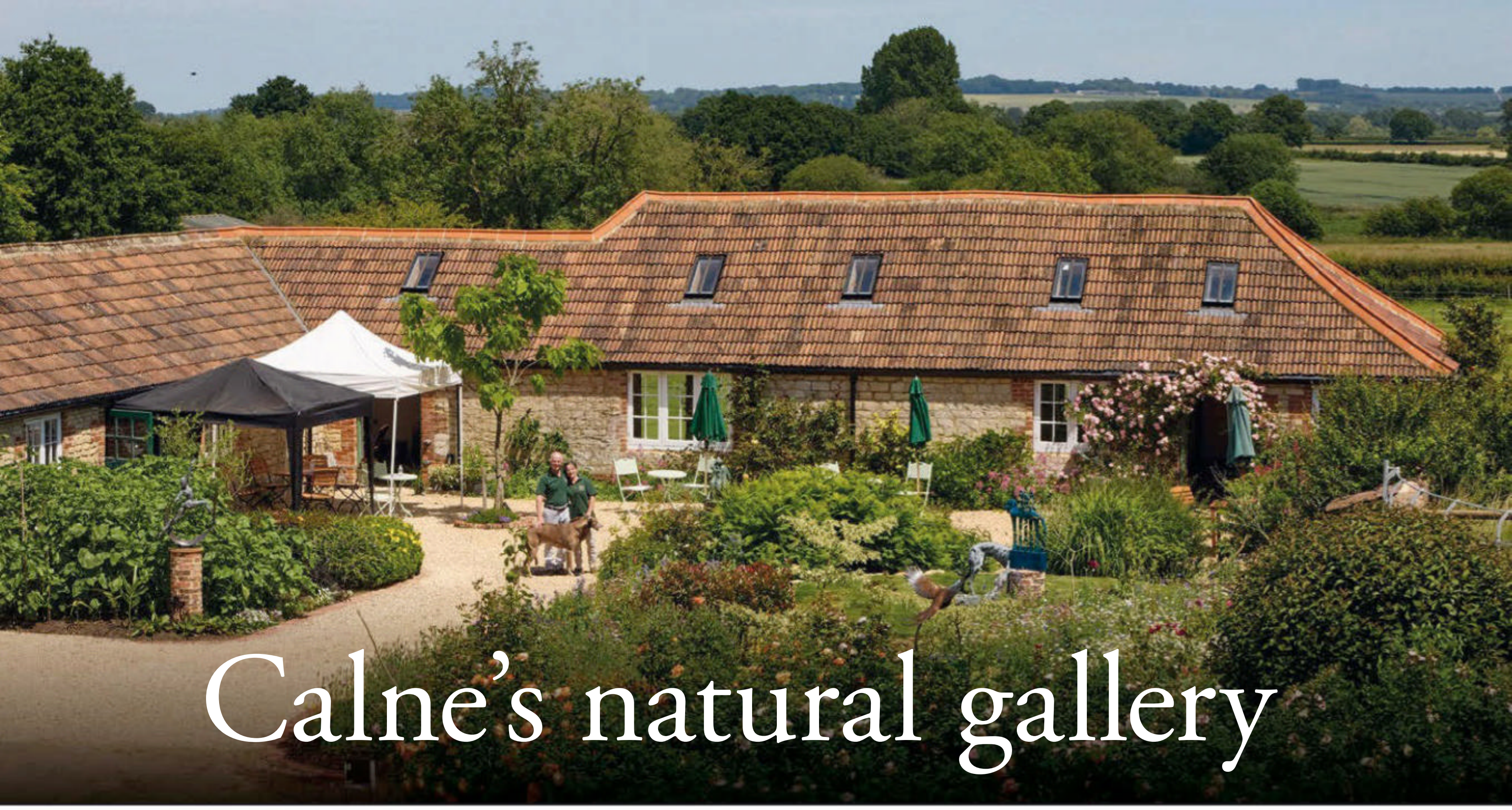


Calne's natural gallery

Summer is here again, and the Talos Gallery, near Calne, is preparing to open its delightful old dairy buildings and breath-taking gardens, stocked with a new collection of sculpture and painting for the discerning art lover. Here the team reveal what to expect this year.

THE TALOS Summer Exhibition has become a popular annual event, renowned for the quality and diversity of the artwork on display, and it's delightful setting in picturesque Wiltshire countryside.

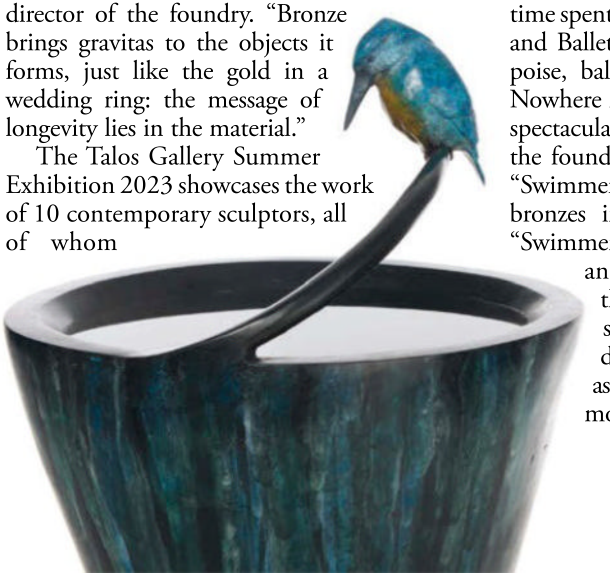
Owners Richard Atkinson-Willes and Sara Fogg have designed and planted the gallery garden from scratch and have enjoyed nurturing and watching it grow into the oasis of colour and controlled chaos that gallery visitors love.

"So much sculpture finds its final home in a garden it seems almost like its natural habitat" says Richard. "Whether it's a small piece acting as a feature amongst planting, or a huge statement creating a grand vista in parkland, sculpture has been placed in landscapes small and large for millennia. Fortunately, the latter application is well demonstrated by the gallery's spectacular view of Oldbury Hillfort, the Cherhill White Horse and the stately Lansdowne Monument.

Once inside, however, the scale changes and sculptures can be found in the intimate seclusion of the gallery garden, which reaches into quiet woodland behind the old farmhouse. "The garden has been laid out and planted to combine nature and art as a whole experience, with each showing off the other to its best effect" Richard explains. "Nature has, of course, taken this as a challenge and each year seems intent upon upstaging the artwork that we place in it, but that's a conflict we are happy to encourage, despite the indignant, aesthetic stand-off occurring around them, few of the visitors who sit in our courtyard café among the wildflowers show much concern over who's winning!"

The gallery's close association with the Hampshire based Talos Art Foundry gives visitors the opportunity to see, buy and commission top quality contemporary bronze sculpture by internationally acclaimed artists. "There's no tradition older than bronze casting, nor any known technology so instrumental in human civilisation," says Richard, who is also director of the foundry. "Bronze brings gravitas to the objects it forms, just like the gold in a wedding ring: the message of longevity lies in the material."

The Talos Gallery Summer Exhibition 2023 showcases the work of 10 contemporary sculptors, all of whom have their work cast into bronze by Richard's Talos Art Foundry.



Above: Richard Atkinson-Willes and Sara Fogg

Below: Pat Bull - Kingfisher Bird Bath.

Jonathan Hateley, who exhibits widely in galleries and gardens worldwide is now highly sought after, with editions selling out quickly to his worldwide collector base. Jonathan will be showing three of his signature hand-painted bronze sculptures at Talos this year, along with a selection of studies in bronze resin.

We are also thrilled to have two brand new pieces by sculptor Mike Long, whose passion for anatomy and movement comes from his time spent with London Contemporary Dance and Ballet Rambert, where Mike studied the poise, balance and strength of the dancers. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Mike's spectacular sculpture of a male dancer, cast by the foundry last year, or in his newest piece, "Swimmers", which will be amongst the large bronzes in this year's Summer Exhibition. "Swimmers" has just been patinated after an epic fortnight spent building the sinuous reed structures which support two beautifully detailed free-divers. It's an engineering tour de force as well as the culmination of many months of study and making.

The technical mastery seen in work by sculptors like Jonathan Hateley and Mike Long owes much to the skill of the foundry's technicians. The Talos Art Foundry is particularly fortunate to have two very experienced chasers (who assemble, finish and patinate the bronze casts) who are themselves artists: Matthew Duke and Patrick Bull.

Matt has developed a signature style of highly finished animal studies which capture the dynamism and energy of his subjects – some as tiny as mice and others as majestic as his new 'Red Kite', which stands two metres tall.

Both Matt and Pat are masters of the art of patination (when the bronze is heated and given its final colour). Like all artists, they love to push the boundaries of what is possible and explore ever more astonishing colour effects. Pat's conical bird bath reflects the jewel colours of a solitary kingfisher – it's a beautiful piece and we are so proud to feature the very latest work from these two great technicians in the Talos summer show.

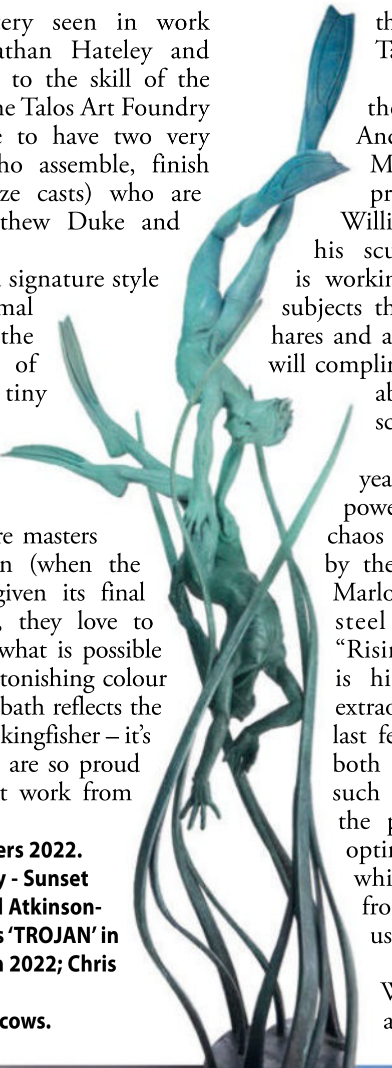
It's an exciting time in the foundry, with work by Andrzej Szymczyk and William Montgomery being cast and prepared ready for the exhibition. William, who is best known for his sculptures of African wildlife, is working on studies of very British subjects this year: Jersey calves, dancing hares and a pair of startled grouse, which will compliment a new collection of semi-abstract work by Oxford based sculptor Pam Foley.

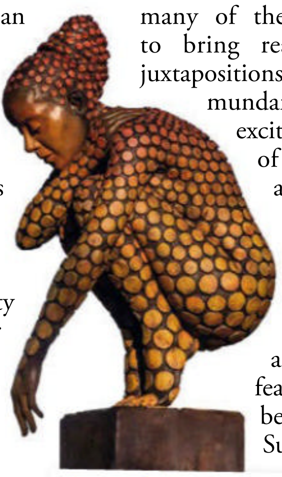
It is not surprising that this year's exhibition also includes some powerful responses to the feeling of chaos and uncertainty left behind by the Covid pandemic. Ian Marlow's brilliant stainless steel construction "Rising from Chaos" is his reaction to the extraordinary events of the last few years: it embodies both the turbulence that such events cause and the power of the hope, optimism, and generosity which seem to appear from nowhere to save us from ourselves.

Richard Atkinson-Willes' "Big C" is another confirmation of our ability to rise above the maelstrom of existence, but on a much more intimate level: the sculpture chronicles a series of conversations between Richard and Rosie Wyatt (wife of sculptor Alexander Brewood) about her experience of living with cancer. In "Big C", Richard creates a grand portrait in an ornate frame – but there's no person in it, just a story – a poignant piece, on show for the first time a year after Rosie's death.

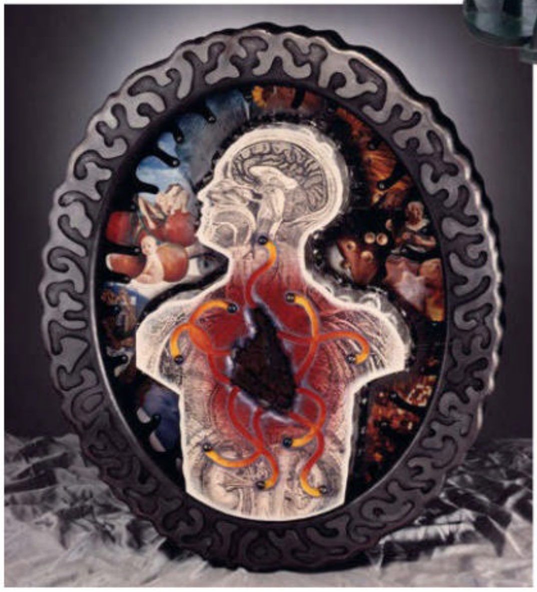
It's hard to select paintings to accompany an exhibition of bronze sculpture, not just because painting is by its nature more ephemeral, but because painters of the last 100 years have explored beyond the tradition of highly crafted painting into new, more dynamic and experimental territory.

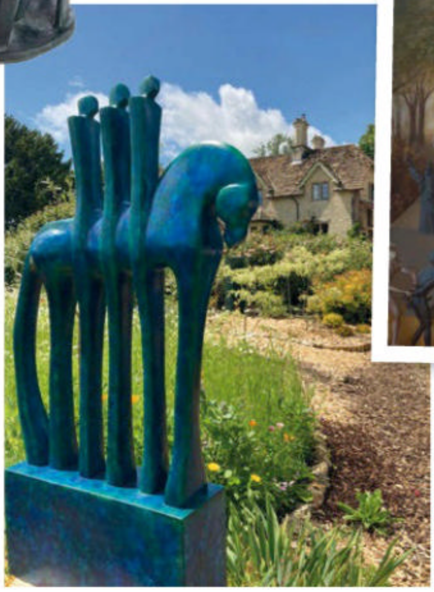
There are exceptions, of course: Surrealism and the British Idiosyncratic artists revived many of the traditions of fine painting to bring reality to their extraordinary juxtapositions of strange objects in otherwise mundane settings, and we are very excited to be showing the work of Christopher Green, whose astonishing portfolio of work remains largely undiscovered despite its remarkable quality. Chris' work is undeniably comparable to the greatest of the so called 'Portal painters', and we are delighted to be featuring a major collection of his best pieces in the Talos Gallery Summer Exhibition.

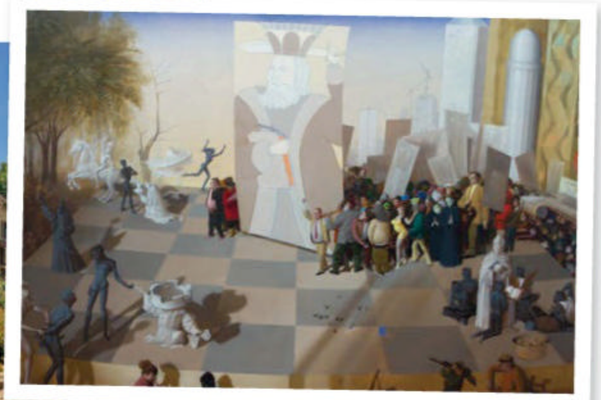


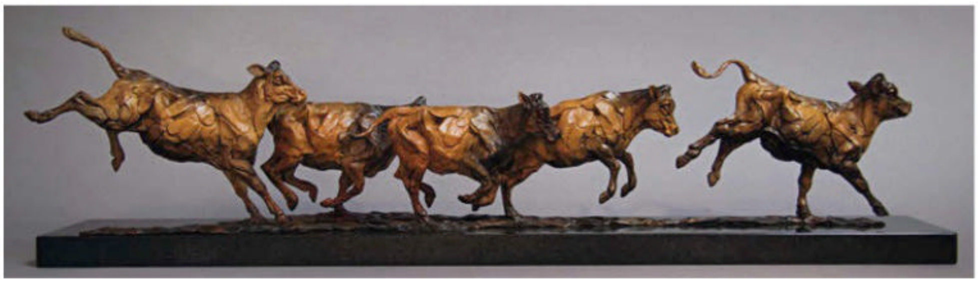


Right: Mike Long - Swimmers 2022.
Far right: Jonathan Hateley - Sunset
Below left to right: Richard Atkinson-Willes 'Big C' ; Marie Ackers 'TROJAN' in the Talos Sculpture Garden 2022; Chris Green - 'Cardboard King'.
Bottom: Will Montgomery cows.









Visitor information

The Talos Gallery Summer Exhibition runs from June 1 to July 30,2023.

Open Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday 11am - 5pm – no booking required. Closed Monday and Tuesday. Open to pre-booked groups only on Wednesday. Admission £5. Toilets and refreshments are available onsite. Please note that wheelchair access is difficult.

- *To pre-book, please visit www.talosartgallery.co.uk*
  Talos Art Gallery is at Broads Green Farm, Heddington, Nr Calne SN11 0NX

Malmesbury business is a piece of cake

Victoria Parry turned her back on a high-flying corporate career to follow a dream and open her bakery shop, The Cake Tin. She tells Gary Lawrence about the journey.

AS A cake-based replica of a cat goes, it may not have been the most lifelike but when it came crashing down on to the carpet and got coated in pet fur it acquired a new level of authenticity that its nine-year-old creator hadn't intended.

"I made it for my dad and I dropped it," recalls Victoria Parry. "Now and then he gets out a photograph of it to remind me." If you think that disaster might have put her off baking you'd be wrong, as a second place in the *Wiltshire Life* Independent Retailer of the Year award for her Malmesbury shop The Cake Tin testifies.

But it has been a circuitous route, via catering college, marketing, banking and television, to get to her sponge-filled destiny. Even when she finally got there calamity awaited. If her journey could be likened to a set of ingredients forming a perfectly balanced cake mix, then the pandemic was the equivalent of yanking the oven door open mid-bake.

Less than three months after her shop opened its doors in Malmesbury High Street they were slammed shut again when the country went into lockdown. It was a blow for any business but for one so young it could have been fatal.

It's an indication of the 42-year-old's determination and perseverance that it is thriving now. The Swindon-born mum of four, who grew up in Bristol, went to catering college after school, supplemented by an evening cake decorating course but decided being a chef was not for her.

"I realised it wasn't for me," she says. "I hadn't realised until I worked in a kitchen that I don't particularly like cooking – but I love baking."

Instead after college she went into marketing and ended up at Lloyds Bank. Her 20-year spell there encompassed marriage, the birth of her son Ethan, divorce and a move to Hullavington with new husband David. They had daughter Matilda in 2016.

Her passion for cake decorating was rekindled when, without realising, she entered the ultra-competitive world of children's birthday parties – that unspoken throwing down of gauntlets (or maybe oven gloves) that drive parents to outdo one another when producing cakes.

The Cake Tin
Cupcake Flavour Menu
£2.50 each or 6 for £12.50
The Cake tin
Brownies – £3 EACH
4 for £10.00
6 for £15.00
CUPCAKES – £2.50 EACH
★ 6 for £12.50 ★
Cookies – £2 each
3 for £5

Victoria Parry with the latest delicious offerings.

JIMMY CHOO
LONDON
...ppy 40th Birthday Bryony

THE CAKE TIN
THE CAKE TIN
PARTIES

Above: One of Victoria's innovative bespoke celebration cakes and right, The Cake Tin on Malmesbury High Street.

"I decided for a New Year's resolution in 2018 I was going to get better at cakes because I started to notice I was no longer the best person doing it and I wanted to be," she recalls. "I needed to up my game. I might have taken it a bit far, but there you go."

She returned to cake decorating classes and discovered a new intricate world of sugar paste that had rendered over-elaborate piped icing a thing of the past. But it was an advert on Facebook spotted on the train home from work in London that changed everything.

"It was for *Kirstie's Homemade Christmas* on Channel 4, a show about handicrafts, and creating a Christmas cake was one of the categories. I thought this would be a great way to finish a challenge so I entered," she says. "I absolutely love Christmas and I used to adore the ballet so I came up with an idea to make a standalone cake model of The Nutcracker."

The design, aided by graphic designer dad Steve Amey, caught the imagination of the show's judges and she could hardly believe it when she found herself in a TV studio being told by host Kirstie Allsopp that she had beaten three professional wedding cake designers to first place.

By this time she was already tiring of the banking world and looking for something different so when the opportunity to take redundancy came along she grabbed it with both hands. "I had thought about opening a business to do with cake decorating and baking but winning the TV thing gave me the confidence I don't necessarily think I had before," she says. "I suddenly went from knowing I could do cakes to believing I could make a business."

Her work for the bank gave her the knowhow to draw up a business plan. She realised a bakery alone couldn't survive so she came up with a three-pronged plan – selling cake-making and decorating materials alongside her own cakes and combining that with running decorating workshops and parties.

While having coffee with a friend at the Summer Café in Malmesbury High Street she spotted an empty shop opposite and when she looked around the 400-year-old, four-storey former wine bar building society and all manner of shops, she knew she'd found a home.

> 'I thought this would be a great way to finish a challenge '

The next challenge was a name. Victoria's Sponges was rejected because a Google search just returned recipes. The next suggestion didn't even make it to Google for obvious reasons.

"I really wanted to call it Moist but so many people told me not to call it that," she says. "It's a legitimate way to describe a good sponge but we decided Malmesbury wasn't ready for it." The Cake Tin was suggested by a New Zealander based on the rugby ground of the same name there.

She recruited friend Jo Williamson to work with her and opened at Malmesbury's Christmas late-night shopping event on December 5, 2019. "It was scary because I didn't really know what I was looking at," she recalls. "The night before we opened I suddenly realised I had never worked in a shop and never even operated a till before."

She needn't have worried, the reaction was positive and the fledgling business was bobbing along nicely – until in February 2020 a customer ordering a wedding cake asked what would happen if this health thing everyone was talking about forced her to postpone her nuptials.

"Jo and I looked at each other and said 'that won't happen will it?', Victoria says. A week before lockdown David went down with Covid and by the time the family emerged from isolation in March her business was shuttered.

What followed was months of hard slog as, after furloughing Jo, she threw herself into baking and delivering cupcakes that were being ordered by phone. She brought forward plans for online ordering and saw demand go through the roof. People, it turned out, needed little treats.

"I was looking after Matilda all day while David worked and going out to do deliveries at 7pm before going back to the shop to bake for the next day," she says. "There were times when I was so tired I didn't know what to do with myself. I don't think I would ever drive myself that far into something if I had to do it again."

One Covid-inspired marketing tactic brought unexpected results. "Random Acts of Cakeyness was David's idea," she recalls. "I wanted to do something quirky to get ourselves better known so we asked people to nominate someone who had done something worthy of a reward and we picked one at random every week and delivered them a cupcake.

"What I didn't anticipate happening is that we would get all these lovely stories about doctors and nurses going above and beyond, mums being thoughtful and all kinds of other nice things people had done for each other."

Above: Victoria Parry and baker Sara Constable busy in the shop's tiny but well-ordered kitchen.

Right: The cat cake made by a nine-year-old Victoria Parry after its unfortunate tumble. Her dad Steve still teases her about it now.

Below: One of Victoria's fun birthday celebration cakes.

The business kept its head above water and despite not making a profit, it covered the rent and other costs throughout the pandemic. Being forced to offer a smaller range of products taught Victoria valuable lessons about keeping her menu simple, which profited production and made choice easier for her customers.

Since Covid she has expanded into wedding cakes and has seen demand for celebration cakes, workshops and parties grow steadily, while the seasonal ranges of cupcakes remain popular.

Cake decorator Paula Webb joined the business two years ago and has since been joined by baker Sara Constable and part-timers Izzy Perry and Megan Cross. Ethan, now 17 and set on a police career, works on Saturdays.

The extra staff have allowed Victoria to step back a little to concentrate on developing new products, like a range of gourmet donuts about to be launched, and finding new corporate clients – although she still makes all the wedding cakes and runs the workshops and children's parties upstairs.

She acknowledges the support of her staff, her husband and her parents Steve and Susie. "I have a brilliant team," she says. "When you are making handmade products you are only as good as what you can produce and I have been very, very lucky with the guys we have here.

"My dad does all of the menus and the window displays and mum comes in and sorts out the stock room. David is there to look after Matilda so I can work when I need to.

"I absolutely love running this place, it's fantastic. But with any job it is difficult with the work/life balance, especially when you have young kids, so it is important to try and make sure you have got those priorities sorted – and you have the time to spend with them."

She says being honoured at the *Wiltshire Life* awards was a reward for everyone who supports her. "It was really special and the experience was just fab because we felt we were being recognised for something," she says.

With the cost of living crisis sending the price of raw materials through the roof and making cupcakes an unaffordable luxury for many, life, and business, is not without its challenges but Victoria seems the sort who wouldn't want it any other way.

"It is very difficult setting up a business, going from a successful career at Lloyds to running a cake shop, you are never going to make the same money but there are other compensations," she says.

"It is hard work and it changes daily. You think you've got something sorted but no, you need to develop it more. You think you have enough things on your menu but no, you need more. It is all about evolving on a daily basis and making sure we don't stand still."

The cat may have bitten the dust but Victoria is the one who is purring.

- *Find out more about the business at thecaketinshop.co.uk.*

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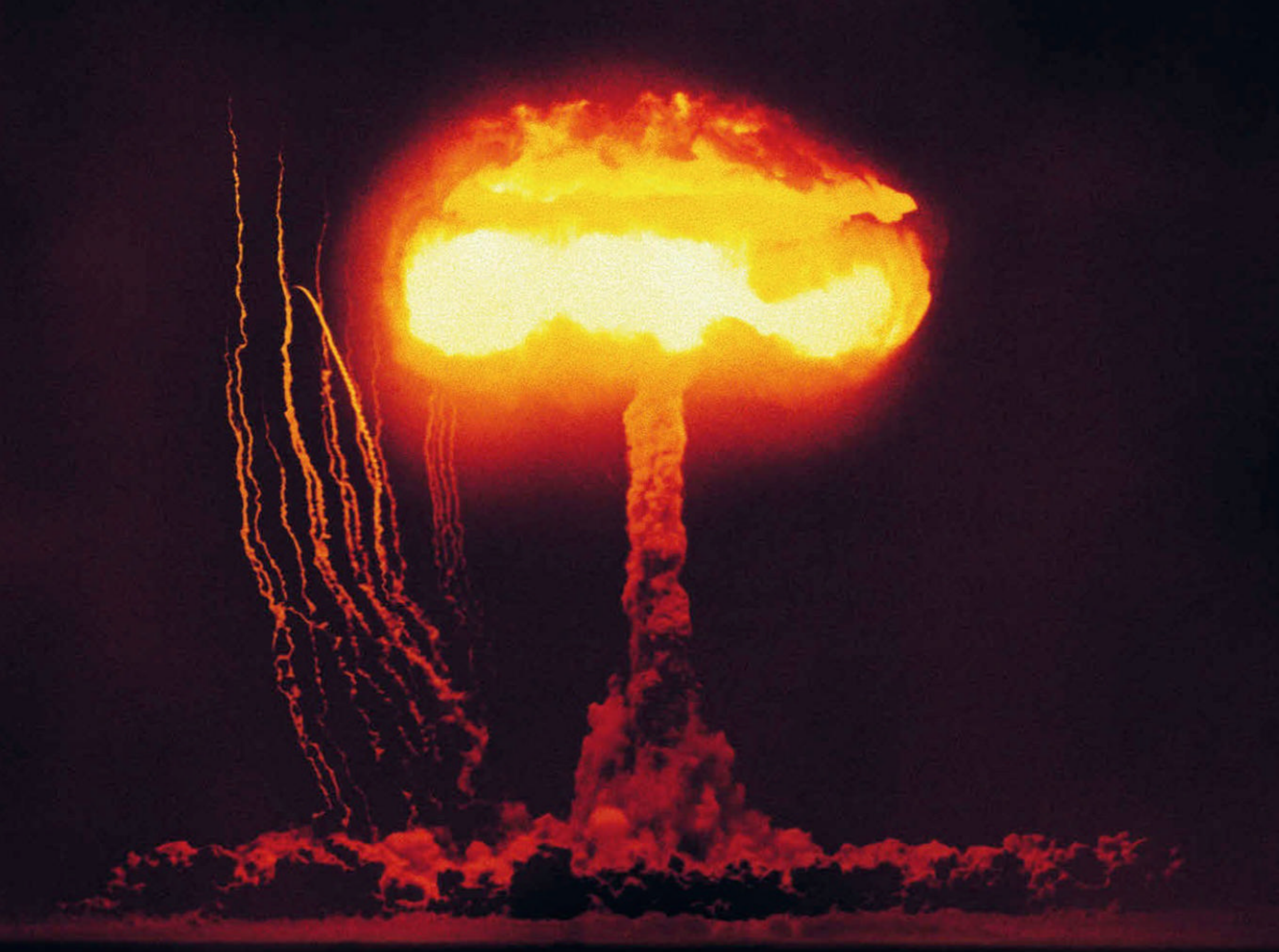


Veteran still bears the scars of nuclear tests

Few people in the world have experienced the destructive power of a nuclear explosion but navy veteran David Taunt survived 24 of them. He told Gary Lawrence about a dream posting to a desert island that became a vision of hell.

The distinctive nuclear test mushroom cloud.

IT WAS a grim, dank day with rain teeming down from glowering skies on to a group of veterans and their families gathered beneath a wind-battered gazebo. Maybe the dampness on the old comrades' faces was just the weather or it could have been the emotion of being told their service to their country was at last being recognised after almost 60 years.

Surprise guest Prime Minister Rishi Sunak told surviving members of the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association (BNTVA), and relatives of those who have died, that King Charles had sent him to tell them they will receive a campaign medal after years of being denied one by the Ministry of Defence.

"It was very emotional because it has taken so long and you think of all your old mates who are not there," says former Royal

Navy mechanical engineer David Taunt as he recalls the event at the National Memorial Arboretum last November. "This was a fight that had been going on for 25 years."

The announcement took the dignified Blunsdon 80-year-old's mind back to 1961 and a gangling 18-year-old being called into an office in Portsmouth to be told the news that would alter the course of his life. "The officer told me how lucky I was that I was off to a South Pacific paradise island for a year, he said 'you're going to Christmas Island pal'," recalls David. "My first reaction was 'where the hell is that?' But I didn't really want to ask'."

> 'Now I am totally convinced we were guinea pigs'

By then he'd been in the navy for three years, including serving aboard anti-aircraft frigate HMS Puma around the Indian Ocean and the South Atlantic. It was just a week before he flew out to Christmas Island that he discovered it had been a nuclear testing site.

In 1957 and 58 the British had detonated up to five atomic and nuclear weapons as part of Operation Grapple. Most of the army personnel and scientists had long departed but a small detachment, bolstered by the navy and the RAF, remained at the base – partly to guard it and partly to clean up the mess left behind.

"We heard unofficially that the island had been exposed to radiation but I was 18, I didn't know anything and we weren't told anything," he recalls.

If he had any nagging worries they must have been dispelled by what was an impossibly glamorous trip for a naïve 18-year-old from Oxford. He flew out via New York, Chicago, San Francisco and Honolulu to a tropical atoll full of lagoons and palm trees, inhabited by grass-skirted indigenous population. "It really was a paradise island," recalls David. "When I got there I was maintaining the landing craft but I was moved to the transport department where I maintained four Land Rovers, eight pushbikes and a go-kart we used to race the army and the RAF in.

"We spent our time off swimming, diving water-skiing and fishing, you couldn't ask for more."

Everything changed in March 1962 when the British government allowed the Americans to use Christmas Island to carry out its own tests. "They brought about 2,000 military personnel and scientists but we barely saw them," says David. "They built their own town on the other side of the island.

"The only contact we had with them was when we used to sneak up to their camp to try and get a decent meal because they were fed so much better than us. We went in with a really strange American accent and persuaded our way in. They had giant grilled steaks and fresh milk, which was a lot better than bully beef and condensed milk."

David and his pals visited again when they discovered their colonial cousins had better bedding. "They had interior sprung mattresses while ours were horsehair. We worked out we could get four in the back of a Land Rover and we knew what time chow was," he says.

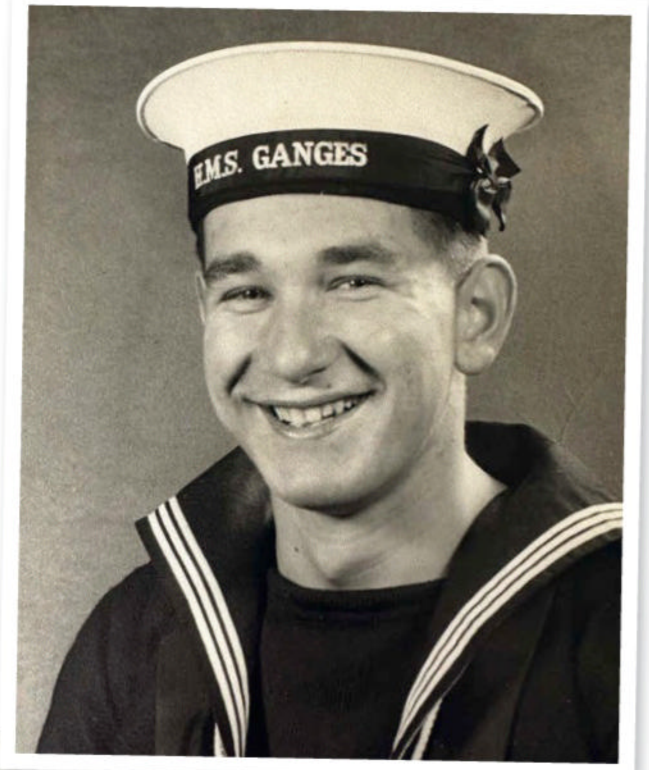
"We had about four or five decent nights' sleep before someone grassed us up. We had two days leave stopped but where were we going to go anyway?"

Within six months the Americans and their comfy beds had departed but in a 78-day period under Operation Dominic they detonated 24 thermo-nuclear bombs with yields up to 700 times the size of the Hiroshima bomb. All of them were detonated in mid-air, ranging in distance between 15 and 40 miles from Christmas Island.

Each time the British contingent were ordered outside to watch. "After the first few, us navy guys got a bit blasé about being woken up at 4.30am so we rolled over and went back to sleep," says David. "The army guys had to go out every time though. We had no idea why we were expected to go out or what we were expected to do. Now I am totally convinced we were guinea pigs.

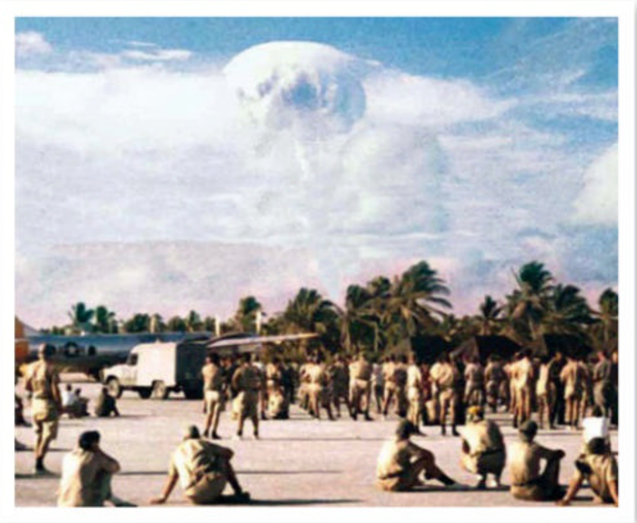
"What was so disappointing was that no one told us anything, nothing about the effects of radiation exposure. No one knew anything until years later. No one did any health checks on us, that we knew of, but I am a firm believer that we were monitored and possibly still are."

David spent another 10 years in the navy before discharging and following



David Taunt as a young recruit at HMS Ganges; with one of the Land Rovers in his care on Christmas Island 1961.

David Taunt recollects his experience of events on Christmas Island in 1962



David Taunt is in his kitchen with wife Ronnie as he describes what it is like to witness a nuclear explosion, but you can tell that in his mind he is back on a makeshift sports field made from crushed coral on a faraway island, reliving that unimaginable destructive power.

"We were all told to muster outside at about 4.30am and sit on the ground with our heads bowed and our hands over our eyes, facing away from where the blast would be. We were sitting there in shorts, shirt and a floppy hat – the only protection we were given were blackout goggles. That's all we had.

"We were listening to the countdown over the Tannoy… 'five, four, three, two, one, bomb away'. "The next thing we'd hear was 'one minute to detonation' and by now every one of us was petrified because we did not know what was happening.

"Then it was 'five, four, three, two, one' and that was it.

"The first thing I felt was this incredible white flash. Even though I had my hands over my eyes I felt like it was brighter than the sun. I looked through my glasses and just for a second I could see all the bones in my hands.

"Then I felt this incredible heat, for three or four seconds – it was like walking through a baker's oven – very uncomfortable and it went right through your body. That was when it became really frightening because I didn't know if we were going to burn up, it was so intense.

"After the detonation we were told we could face in its direction, which everyone did. There was total silence because we were all still shocked. For a second or so we felt the wind increasing very rapidly, I'd describe it more as pressure than a wind. Then the blast hit us and that was unbelievable.

"A lot of people were blown over, it really did hit you and there was the most tremendous boom. For some time afterwards there was a rumble, like a deep thunder that quietly dissipated. For a few seconds there was silence and then everyone started talking, there was a lot of military language with reference to hell.

"By then it was breakfast time and afterwards we just carried on with our job."

another schoolboy dream – to become a rally driver. He owned and ran the Silverstone Rally School for 25 years before retiring and moving to Blunsdon with second wife Ronnie in 2009.

It was around then that he learned one of his best friends on the island had died aged 59 from cancer. His friend's son put him in touch with the BNTVA and he discovered more about the campaign for the medal – and the toll the radiation was taking on those who served.

Soon after he was diagnosed with lung cancer during an investigation into a heart problem – ironically, he was treated with radiotherapy – and two years ago his sight began to deteriorate. He is now registered blind.

David Taunt and his wife Ronnie at their home in Blunsdon.

He says: "The BNTVA's membership is decreasing rapidly and there are not many actual veterans left. A lot of the members are now descendants, like my daughters Teresa and Shelley.

"Over the period of the tests from 1952 to 1962, and that's including those in Australia in the Montebello Islands, Emu Field and Maralinga, there were 22,000 military personnel involved. There aren't many more than 1,000 left and the majority are suffering with something."

There are many conspiracy theories about the MoD's lack of transparency over the effects of testing on men like David and what it knew before they were put in harm's way.

A UK Health Security Agency report published last year said nuclear test veterans are nearly four times more likely to die from cancer. The MoD still insists servicemen were "well protected".

"Whether my illness is related to being exposed to radiation nobody knows because they are not going to tell us anyway and so much documentation has disappeared," says David. "My navy service records don't show I was actually on the island at all.

"When I was diagnosed with the cancer, the specialist I saw in Oxford said it was due to radiation exposure. I had further appointments made with him but when I went back, he was gone, and no one would answer me about where he had gone. It might be a conspiracy theory but it's weird."

The medal should be presented in the summer, 61 years after he first stepped on to Christmas Island. "I don't feel bitter, you can't can you? It was exciting to see something like that and be one of the few people in the world to have witnessed it and survived," he says.

"But I have three fantastic grandsons and a great granddaughter and one of the saddest things for me is that I can't see my little great granddaughter growing up.

"We were kids when we were sent there, doing what we were told to do. I'm upset because it has taken this long. Had they awarded us a medal a year after we had got home we would have felt like heroes."

- *David and Veronica have been supported by the charity Blind Veterans UK, find out more at blindveteransuk.org, and The Not Forgotten, whose website can be found at thenotforgotten.org.*

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Dress to impress

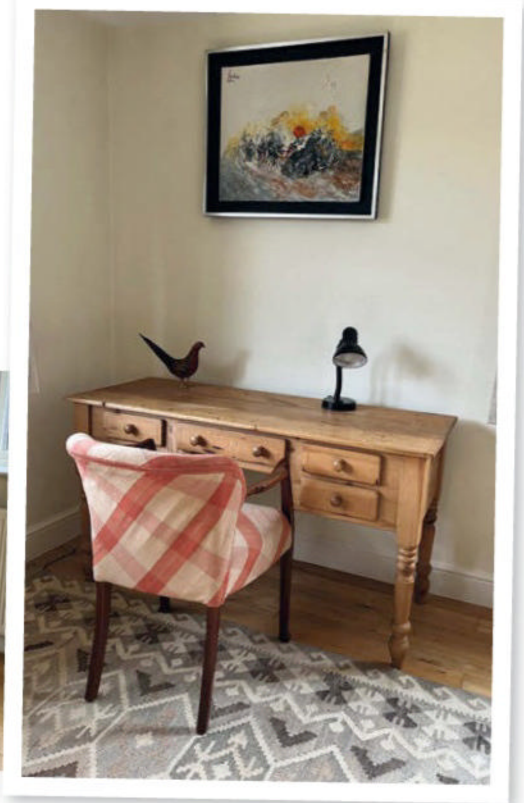
Digger & Mojo's Clarissa Reilly shares tips on how to make your property more desirable when putting it on the market.

IT IS the time of year when the UK property market has fully sprung into action. House and flat vendors and buyers are visiting estate agents and scrolling through online property websites. Warmer weather and longer hours of sunlight makes for more viewings at either end of the day. The rentals market, which is year round, also sees a boost as vendors, selling their own property, look to move into rented accommodation while checking out a new area, and awaiting the finding of their dream new home.

Some online property and estate agents' websites are more appealing and easily navigated than others. Floorplans, together with details of local amenities, energy performance certificates and council tax ratings, are useful, but nothing matters more than images. The photos of a property can make all the difference. It's worth spending a little money and putting in some effort to create more interest, and more competing purchasers or tenants. Props for properties.

Here at Digger & Mojo we run a service furnishing properties for sale or rent. We dress them to look their absolute best, and to give those prospective buyers or tenants who lack imagination, (a higher proportion of people than you might imagine) an idea of how good the property could look, to maximise space, or show the versatility of different rooms.

Dressing an empty room creates a warm welcome making a house feel more like home.



A nicely presented semi-furnished property looks much more appealing online and in person when you visit. Instead of an empty echoey box, all carpet or wooden flooring, with no warmth or character, you can create an atmosphere that will entice prospective buyers in, or persuade tenants that the space is suitable for them. Not a property but a home.

Here are a few DIY tips from us if you need to decorate and furnish a property for sale or to rent out. Firstly, neutral backdrops are good. If your property is painted in wacky colours it is likely to put off more buyers than it will entice. In those circumstances a swift neutral paint job is best, and the paler the shade used, the larger the rooms will look. Use the same shade throughout the property to give the impression of space. If your property is already a more or less neutral backdrop, you're ahead of the game.

If you're selling or renting a flat in a shared freehold property it may well be worth asking other flat owners if they would chip in to a refurb of the communal parts. A swift neutral paint job and a re-carpet of the hallway and stairs and front door, will be swiftly repaid as that all-important first impression is of a cleaner, classier interior. At the very least a mirror or two in the hallway, and a kilim runner will give a welcoming feel.

Now you have a neutral backdrop, don't be dull. Whether the property is carpeted or has wooden floors throughout, a few colourful kilims add warmth and proportion. Hanging an interesting work of art or print, and placing a quirky antique or vintage statement piece will make your place more memorable for those looking round several properties at once. They'll remember "the flat with the abstract nude in the sitting room" or "the house with the chaise longue in the kitchen" (where it also serves to show them the kitchen is spacious enough to take a sofa). One or two unusual things will create reminders which make your property stand out in what may be a crowded field. Don't overdo it and clutter the place up; you're looking to create an atmospheric scene not a messy one.

Your reception rooms should give indicators of scale, of size and use. Will the room take a pair of sofas and armchairs? Does the fireplace work? Place a few logs and brass fire tools in the hearth to show it does. Is there a place for a large coffee table, laden with magazines, and a stack of large ubiquitous coffee table books? In the country, splash out on a few good quality silk flowers in a jug or vase. In a tiny flat, use a small-scale sofa, and place a smaller scale coffee or side table with a tea cup or a couple of wine glasses on a tray, for atmosphere.

A second reception room which could be a dining room, depending on the purchaser's needs and wishes, or a snug or office, or a combination of them all, should be furnished with chairs, desk and an armchair. An old monitor or TV and a keyboard placed to give the idea of working on a desktop or watching TV. In a much larger property with a separate large dining room, a table, sideboard and an ancestral portrait or two complete the picture. If the property is small, use furniture to show how you can use every inch of space.

Think practically. If the kitchen is a galley make sure if it is left uncluttered. If there is room for a breakfast bar console and high stools, pop them in. If the kitchen is a larger scale room, then be sure to use enough furniture to demonstrate that. If it will take a table to seat eight, put one in and add the eight chairs. If there is space for a sofa, place one of those there too.

Mirrors bring light to dark corners; pictures can be used to accent colours, and change up the atmosphere. Children's pictures are a good idea in a single bedroom. Colourful wall art gives a place a warm welcoming feel. In a London flat one might be looking for a more subtle sophisticated impression. Pictures with local interest, maps, local artist or landscapes will intrigue a buyer, especially if new to an area. Or just match the artwork colour-wise to create an attractive scheme.

Simple changes to a room such as hanging pictures, adding cushions, furniture or changing a carpet makes a house or flat more appealing to potential buyers or renters.

Upstairs there should be beds, or at least bedside tables, to indicate the size of bed each room will take. There has been a trend in recent years of people wanting their bedroom and their ensuite to resemble hotel rooms they have stayed in. The country house look, with chintz cushions placed in front of pillows is a quick easy way of doing that. New fluffy white or cream towels and mats are a good idea in any bathroom, as they also trigger-happy memories of hotel stays, and give a positive feel.

Lighting matters. Place lamps in the sitting room for sure, and at least the master bedroom. On a side counter in a large kitchen a lamp can warm what can be a cavernous space. Remember any viewings that take place at dusk or after dark will otherwise be done in harsh overhead top lighting, so use lamps to give a softer, more homely feel.

A garden or terrace should have enough garden furniture of whatever quality just to signify there is space for it, to help imagining sitting outdoors on a bench in a small space, or for dining out of doors in a larger garden in summer.

If you need more practical and professional help than the tips here, please get in touch. Digger & Mojo offer the full service of dressing properties. WL

- *diggerandmojo.com*
  Telephone: 01672 851510
  Email:ask@diggerandmojo.com

Make an impression and dress the home

Flowers are perfect for making that first impression both with their scent and their magnificent blooms. The team at Pod & Pip in Coombe Bissett share five simple ways to give an instant uplift to a room to help dress the house.

1. Fill with fragrance

Scented flowers fill the room and make an instant impression. A vase filled with sweet peas, stocks or lilies really pack a punch on the perfume. Freesias are also hugely popular for their scent and last well in a vase too. Roses cut from the garden can also too be highly scented and create that homely country style.

2. Big Blooms

A vase filled with statement blooms such as sunflowers or peonies, dahlias are an easy way to make a quick first impression and only one vase can be needed, just add foliage, let the flowers do the work!

3. Pots and plants

It doesn't have to be cut flowers, spring bulbs not only look beautiful but some of them are highly scented such as paperwhites and hyacinths which adds another dimension. Super easy to pot up in an eye-catching bowl or a basket they are easy to look after as well. They are also relatively long lasting and can be planted out in the garden after they have finished flowering. One big bowl or arrangement of these can be all you need to dress a room. Potted jasmine as well is great for adding scent to a room as well as lily of the valley.

4. En masse

A vase of lots of one type of flowers is a really easy way of creating a luxurious feel. 50 tulips in a vase, a tall vase packed with amaryllis or 10 stems of lily in a vase creates an instantly decadent look and is so easy and quick to do, you just need the right shaped and height vase and then fill it.

5. Bring the outside in

Cutting stems of flowers from the garden creates an instant homely look and helps to showcase the garden too. Super easy to do, no extra costs and will add colour, scent, and instant uplift to a room. Adding homegrown flowers to a jug is a great style tip to dress the house.

- *The next Vase Arrangement Workshop is on May 20. www.podandpip.co.uk*
  Telephone: 07766 775869
  Email sarah@podandpip.co.uk

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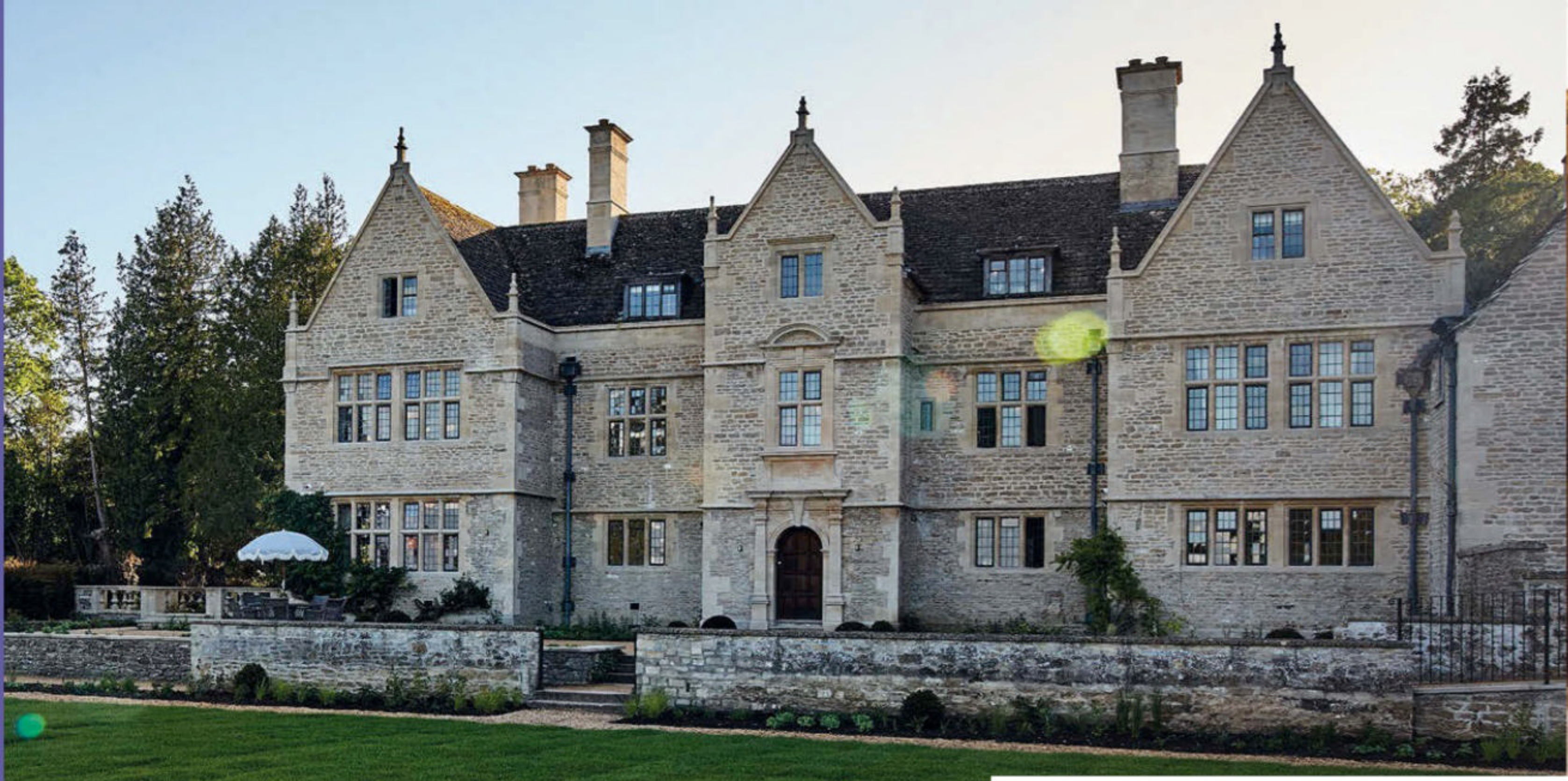


KRISTIN PERES

Making Greathouse great again

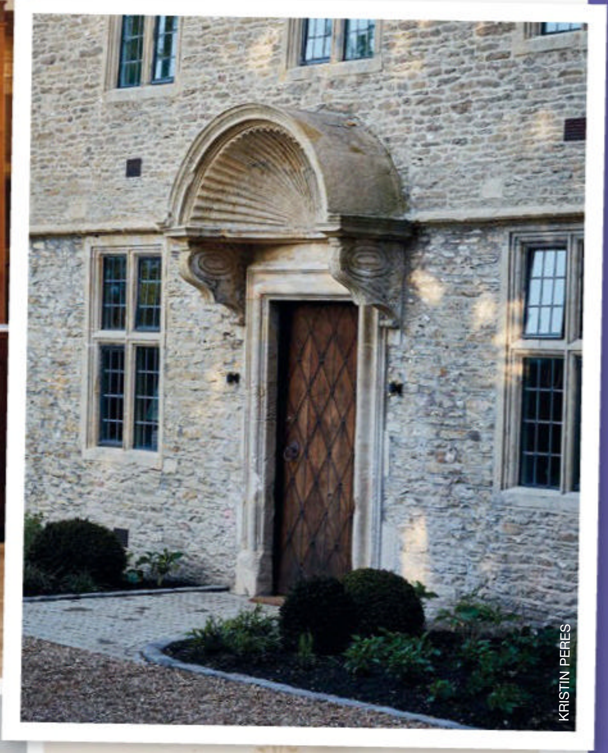
A grand old country house that had fallen into disrepair has been lovingly transformed into a stunning and vibrant place to party. Mary-Vere Parr took a tour around this remarkable renovation.

THE GATES glide open onto an expanse of gravel leading to a heavy oak door. I am entering the world of Kin House, a "new design-led party house" in the village of Kington Langley near Chippenham. The newly jet-washed stone walls of this Georgian manor house positively gleam, the smile of owner Matt Harvey is of a similar mega wattage and everyone and everything inside is as neat and shiny as a new pin.

Matt and Gaby Harvey bought Kin House, known locally as the Greathouse, in 2019. Built in 1680, it has assumed many guises in its near 350-year history, from aristocratic home to silk weaving factory and finally, until 2018, a Leonard Cheshire care home for adults with physical and learning disabilities. The need for "considerable repairs" led to its auction in 2019.

With their background in commercial property and events, the Harveys saw an opportunity to create what they believe to be a unique concept: an hotel tailored exclusively to private events.

Taking on a dilapidated building had its challenges, especially in the Covid years. The drainage had to be redone, asbestos removed and a 1970s extension demolished. Inside the house, a carved oak staircase was encased in a plasterboard cage and original panelling hidden behind stud walls.



KRISTIN PERES

PHOTOS: OWEN GALE

The exterior of Kin House has been jet-washed and looks as if newly built. There is even a shell grotto- a feature that would be enjoyed by Kin's former Georgian residents.

"We started picking away at it in 2020," Harvey recalls. "We kept a good momentum, but it was expensive to keep on path." The budget was truly blown off course when the opportunity arose to buy the adjacent stables, glasshouses and the one-and-a-half-acre walled garden. "It was one of the biggest stresses but it was a blessing to have control of the whole the estate," Harvey says.

The project, he says, has been about "reimagining the house for a new generation". Instagram may be Kin House's biggest and thoroughly contemporary bookings driver, but that reimagining has been respectful of both the house's history and its future.

Working with Malmesbury architects Clark and Maslin, Harvey has evidently enjoyed delving into the house's history, showing me pictures on his phone of sale particulars from 1905. The 1920s-themed speakeasy Fitz bar is even named in honour of the Kington Langley's medieval name, Langley Fitzurse.

Where possible, terracotta pavers have been salvaged to reuse in the fireplaces, delft tiles retained and old timbers repurposed.

Everything new has been “put in to last”. “It’s been a pleasure to reset the house for the next 100 years,” Harvey says.

Kin House opened in July 2022 with 12 bedrooooms, the Kilvert Barn, which caters for 200 people, and 10 acres of grounds. Now, the plan is to convert the stables into further bedrooms and a wellness spa, grow vegetables and herbs in the walled garden for the kitchen and open a café and general store for the village.

Harvey grew up down the road at Colerne and talks of creating an “emotional fit for the community”. The café and store will have its own independent entrance that will not compromise the exclusivity of the events space.

“No one’s coming here just for a coffee,” he says, gesturing to the Kin House’s grand entrance hall with roaring open fire and welcoming floral arrangement. “You are arriving for something significant.” That could be a wedding, a birthday dinner, a private lunch, a wellness retreat or a work conference.

On the day of my visit, Craig, the house manager, is styling one of the three reception rooms with some vintage china for a beauty brand client. Later in the week, the 15-strong team are preparing to welcome a car manufacturer for a two week-hire.

Everything is designed with the specific customer in mind, Harvey explains. “We start with the customer and work backwards.” Reception rooms can be set up to suit a variety of scenarios from a small business meeting to an intimate dinner or a cosy film night.

PHOTOS: OWEN GALE

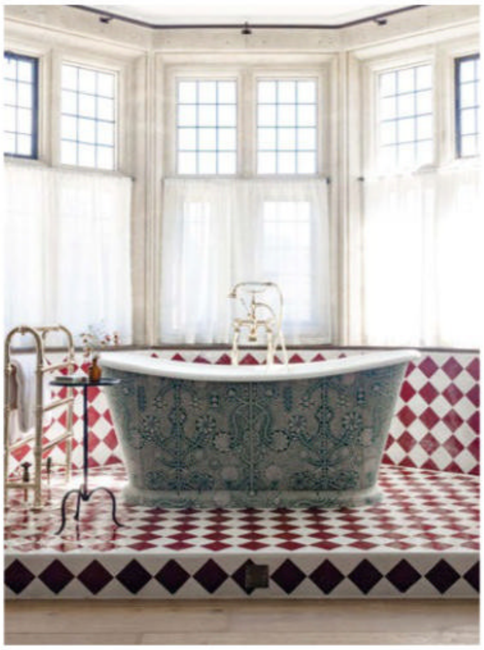
The interiors remain true to the original design but have been updated with a modern twist.

The décor is all down to the London design team Barlow & Barlow run by Lucy Barlow and her husband Joshua Sear. It was Barlow’s first commercial commission and one she was anxious to get right. Tasked with creating something eye-catching and beautiful she set to work on creating “a home away from home”, an English country house style that feels lived in and just a touch eccentric but does not overwhelm so clients can put their own stamp on it.

There are tassels, fringing and velvet galore, contemporary fabrics and chequerboard rugs, but also wide oak floorboards, muted wall paper and plain linen curtains to allow the natural light to flood in the stately bay

The dilapidated building has been painstakingly restored whilst retaining its original features.

KRISTIN PERES



PHOTOS: OWEN GALE

windows and draw the eye to the views over the croquet lawn to the hills beyond.

Consulting with colour specialist Patrick O'Donnell from Farrow and Ball, Barlow has used a largely muted colour palate. Most strikingly in the triple-height Hearth Room, a vaulted baronial hall, the pink of the bare plaster at the top is contrasted with a blue paint further down to give the room a modern twist.

But, throughout the house, there are flashes of signature Barlow & Barlow design flair: modern art prints, bright colours, bold patterns and interesting lighting.

> ‘She's been proved right every time

Perhaps where Barlow has had most fun is in the upstairs Dressing Room, replete with candy pink swivel chairs and hair wash basins, hairdryers and tongs plus her favourite leopard print stools.

Never one to take herself or her décor too seriously, Barlow sprinkles elements of surprise. “There were certain hills that Lucy was prepared to die on,” Harvey recalls. “She's been proved right every time.” These include the commissioning of a shell grotto photo booth and wrapping freestanding baths in a shell fabric by Marlborough-based textile company Fermoie. “They're such a talking point,” Harvey admits. And there is also a design rationale: there is a shell motif carved over the front door of Kin House. “The Georgians were always creating grottos,” Barlow adds.

All the hotel luxuries you might expect are laid on: fluffy bathrobes, toiletries and minbars. The mix of antique and modern furniture livens up the country house look while traditional brass plumbing, well-upholstered chairs and plumped cushions add to the feeling of being looked after.

There is much to do indoors. A programme of monthly events from yoga to floristry, tablescaping and home brewing is planned. But, if you want to escape outside, a team of gardeners tend the formal croquet lawn or you can wander into the wooded glade for dinner under the stars. Harvey is keen to include glamping options. Food can vary from pizza to more formal fayre. There is an in-house team of chefs and the barman knocks up a mean burnt orange negroni. Let the party begin.

- *Kin House, Kington Langley, Wiltshire SN15 5NA. www.kinhouse.co.uk.*

A wild sense of structure

At her home in Tisbury, renowned garden designer Tania Compton has created a garden that at first appears to be wild and meandering but as Mary-Vere Parr discovers there is also a sense of formality and careful planning.

“I’M SO sorry, I’d forgotten you were coming,” Lady Tania Compton calls down, leaning out of an upstairs window of her farmhouse near Tisbury. “We got back late last night and I’d gone back to bed.”

Compton and her botanist husband Jamie, are just back from Socotra, an island in the Indian Ocean famed for its flora and fauna. “Fascinating but hardly relaxing,” explains Compton. They camped in tents and trekked for miles. No wonder she is tired. But the next minute, Compton is at the front door in her Peter Jones furry onesie. She lets me in, makes coffee and settles onto a sofa to chat Wiltshire life and gardens.

Renowned as a garden designer, writer and editor, whose work can be seen in Ibiza, Paris, Provence and Greece, Compton has also put her stamp on some of the greatest private gardens of the county. She has worked at Fonthill House, Longford Castle and Reddish House, once home to Cecil Beaton.

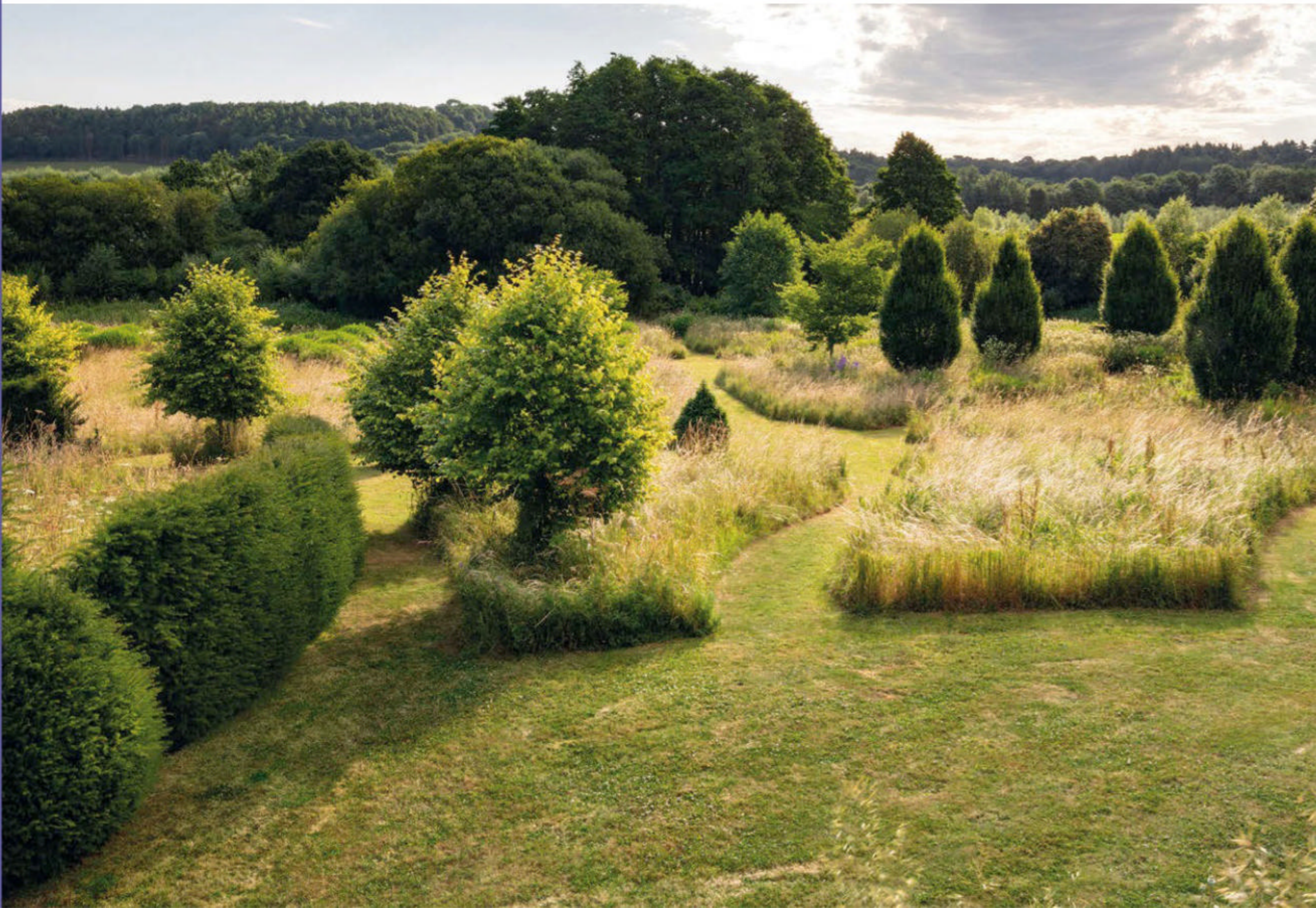
But while some of her designs have been on a grand scale for grand clients, Compton says she is equally happy creating a cottage garden. At home at Spilsbury Farm, in the lee of an Iron Age hill fort, she has eschewed the “fuss and frill” of a formal garden for “mad and wild” meadows, ponds, orchards and trees.

When the Comptons bought Spilsbury Farm in 1998, they arrived with their two small children to six acres of recalcitrant clay, rough sheep pasture fenced with barbed wire, filled with docks and bordered by brambles and nettles.

It was 25 times the size of their first Wiltshire garden in Hanging Langford. Their gardener, Henry Johnson, helped one and a half days a week.

Undaunted, Compton sent the sheep packing, took down the fences, and set about designing the whole space. But there was no “miracle” master plan. Instead, she planted two trees, a Californian oak and a Carl Ferris Miller oak, a rare specimen named after a botanist in South Korea whose arboretum her husband had visited. These were her “stellar points” on which the rest of the garden grew year by year as a result of “meandering, perusing and ruminating”.

Paths through the meadows in summer.



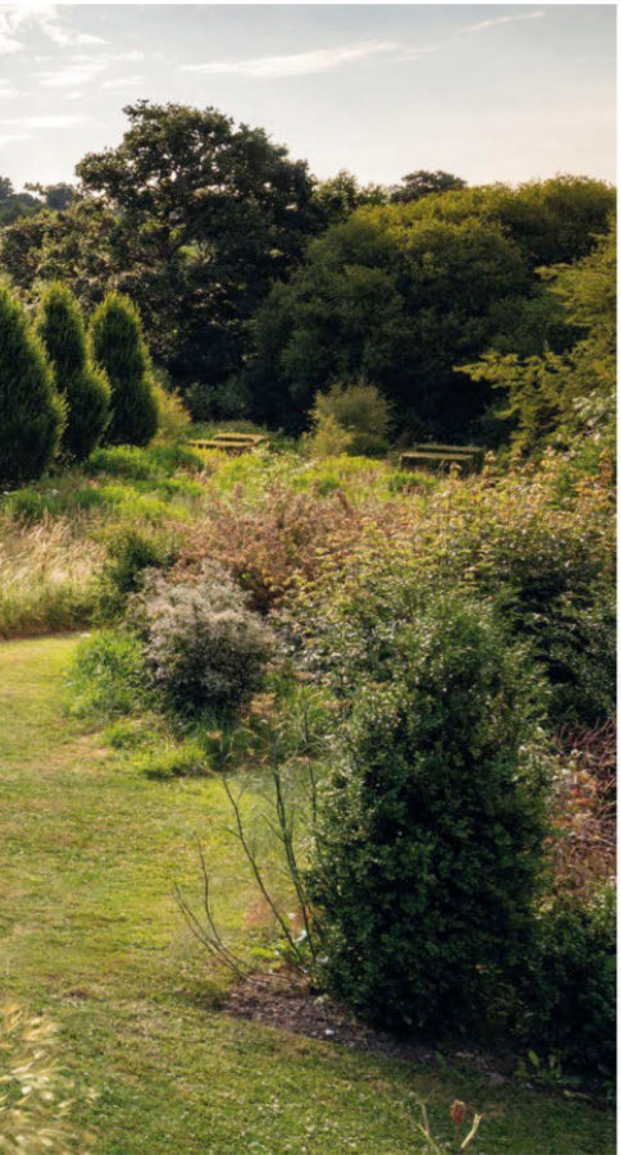
The same approach informs all of Compton's garden designs. "The basic laws of garden physics," she says. "Get your axes in and then mess around. And only bite off as much of a project as you can chew."

Trees are the starting point of every garden. "I love the relationship of a single tree and the house," Compton says. "With every project I work out where the house tree has to go. The foliage of the tree and its structure next to a house always makes the house feel better."

After the initial concept, she will refine plans while living on site. "Its only after a few days of waking up somewhere that you really get a good feel of how you are going to enjoy the garden," she says.

Some structure is necessary "so you get a sense of where you are," Compton adds. Spilsbury is a garden of pointers, of journeys – mown paths through meadows, snowdrop walks along the stream at the foot of the garden - and destinations - a seat under a tree, a pond jetty.

> 'Get your axes in and then mess around'



PHOTOS BY RICHARD BLOOM

Tania Compton with her husband Jamie in the garden at Spilsbury Farm.

"The garden is divided into moments," Compton explains. These are moments to linger rather than labour. "I'd really rather be reading my book on a sunny afternoon than being a slave to the garden," she laughs.

Her favourite places are of those where you can see and feel "the life, the light, the sun and the rain". "If something happened to me and I couldn't garden any more I would only have the pond and a bit of meadow," Compton says. "They're everything, the linchpin of the garden."

Compton is the mistress of low-maintenance gardening. "It's amazing how many people think that you have to do certain things," she says. "What I have done here is go, no, I've not got time to tie roses into the house. They're going to get into a big cascade and then I chainsaw them down to the bottom. Instead of spending three days on each rose every year, I do three hours every five years.

"I wanted the plants but I didn't have time to look after them. So I just circumvent, keep my fingers crossed and nine times out of 10 they come back."

This is not to say Spilsbury is not a gardener's garden. Like my host, there are good bones underlying this beauty, sharp lines and shapes in winter beneath the summer profusion.

The former party girl is a fully-fledged plantswoman. Weekends are dedicated to "pottering" in the garden growing-on plants garnered from her "slippery-fingered moments on the internet" destined for her meadow. "This is what keeps me curious," she says.

Recreating, in Wiltshire today, the exuberance of the Ibizan meadow that sparked her 'damascene conversion… from clubbing to cuttings" 40 years ago remains a challenge. Euphorbia palustris and other Mediterranean plants fight their corner with natives such as meadow sweet against the beefier resident grasses.

The farmhouse and tranquil pond at Spilsbury and below the garden at Fonthill House.

PHOTOS BY RICHARD BLOOM

VAL CORBETT

"I'm just trying to fit in with what's there," Compton says. "There's a lot of dock, there's a lot of marsh thistle. That's the backgound of the tapestry. I'll just embellish it with tough herbaceous perennials that don't look too alien."

The meadow also feeds Compton's latest passion, plant dyes. She shows me swatches of organic silk carefully catalogued, labelled and stored in the drawers of a tallboy in her drawing room. A leafy green is labelled "Sample 225 Black Dahlia". Dahlias and corn marigolds have taken over the veg patch as she builds a fabric colour library: "I want to keep experimenting with colour - I want to get some more blacks and reds."

Compton admits that the meadow was created as a time-saving exercise rather than a conscious act of conservation, although now she sees it as an unconscious attempt to "make amends for the failure of previous generations to prevent the annihilation of 97 per cent of our native meadows".

She used of glyphosate initially to master brambles and nettles, but now only countenances mechanical methods, annually topping the meadow and strimming where necessary. "The number of reasons to stop mowing and spraying go off the radar when you look into the bees, butterflies, beetles and spiders, grasshoppers and moths a meadow shares its bounty with," she says.

"Deer, rabbits, mice, rats and voles all treat this as their own space," she adds. "Which is fine. I now know which roses to plant that the deer won't eat."

It is immensely refreshing to hear Compton talk of guilt-free gardening. "I walk the garden as much as work in it," she says. But she does continue to work and the garden continues to evolve. She is still lifting bulbs in the green every spring, coppicing hazel and strimming brambles to extend the snow drop walk. In lockdown, her husband shored up the banks of the stream with stone. And they have just bought an adjacent field to extend the garden still further.

Compton cites a summer spent working for Penelope Hobhouse in the garden at Tintinhull, Somerset, as her inspiration. "Penny's intellectual curiosity and the fact she is putting up a new greenhouse in her 90s makes her a pretty banging mentor," she says.

At a mere 60, Compton finds that she is in no rush. Plant small trees, they grow faster and need less water, is her eminently practical advice to panicking older clients. "I remember at the beginning I thought 'I'll never get to walk through snowdrops'," she says. "But now I can walk through carpets of snowdrops every year." WL

- *Tania Compton, taniacompton.co.uk, Spilsbury Farm, Tisbury SP3 6RU Fonthill House garden openings April 23 and June 11 2023. www.fonthill.co.uk*

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May delights

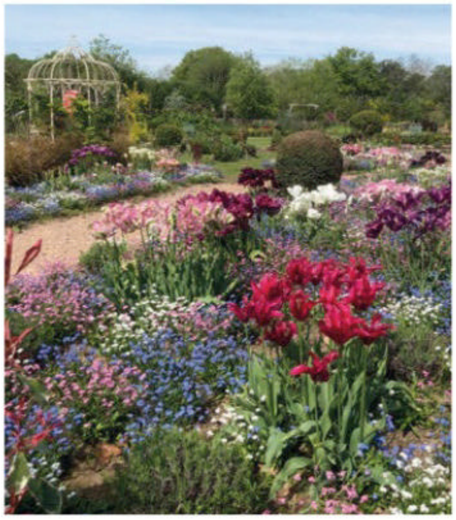
Here is a selection of beautiful gardens across the county opening this month through the National Garden Scheme.

Sunday May 7

NEW FOREST LAVENDER GARDENS

Giles Lane, Landford, Salisbury, SP5 2BG
Open 11am-4pm
Admission £5, children free
Cream teas. Light lunch available

Take time to wander through colourful borders. Be intrigued by plants you may not have seen before. Step back and admire a stunning colourful display of annual and perennial plants. Stroll around themed gardens, dahlia borders, a white garden along with colourful grasses. Wheelchair access from car park to garden and plant sales area. Gravel pathway runs through the garden. Disabled toilet. Visits also by arrangement Apr 15 to June 17,for groups of 10 to 25.



Sunday May 14

ALLINGTON GRANGE

Allington, Chippenham, SN14 6LW
Open 2pm-5pm
Admission £7.50, children free
Home-made teas

Informal country garden around 17th century farmhouse (not open) with year-round interest and a diverse range of plants. There are mixed and herbaceous borders, a pergola underplanted with shade loving plants, and newly developed fountain garden. Also a walled potager, wildlife pond with natural planting, many alpine troughs, and ferns.

Saturday May 20

WINKELBURY HOUSE

Berwick St. John, Shaftesbury, SP7 0EY
Open 2pm-5pm
Admission £7.50, children free
Home-made teas

Refreshments in aid of St John's church the village hall. One-and-a-half acres with glorious views of surrounding countryside. The garden has evolved over the last six years to include a kitchen garden with bothy and greenhouse, mown paths through informal areas, a meadow planted with spring bulbs, 30 metre iris border, ha-ha, wildlife pond and bee friendly planting. This is a new garden for 2023.

Sunday May 21

TWIGS COMMUNITY GARDEN

Manor Garden Centre, Cheney Manor, Swindon, SN2 2QJ
Open 12 noon-4pm
Admission £4, children free
Home-made teas

A delightful two-acre community garden, created and maintained by volunteers. Features include seven individual display gardens, an ornamental pond, plant nursery, Iron Age round house, artwork, fitness trail, separate kitchen garden site , Swindon beekeepers and the haven, overflowing with wildflowers. Most areas wheelchair accessible. There is a disabled toilet at nearby garden centre. Also open for NGS on July 16.

Sunday May 28

NORTH COTTAGE

Tisbury Row, Tisbury, SP3 6RZ
Open 11am-5pm
Admission £5, children free
Light home-made lunches and teas

Although modest, there is much variety to find. The garden is divided with lots to explore as each part differs in style and feel, augmented with pottery and woodwork handmade by the owners. From the intimacy of the garden go out to see the orchard and ponds, walk the coppice wood and see the rest of the smallholding. Also open 18 June please see NGS website for extra pop-up open days. WL

For more information

For details of all the gardens shown here and details of the National Gardens Scheme head to their website: www.ngs.org.uk. To arrange a visit to a By Appointment garden:

- www.ngs.org.uk/wiltshire-by-arrangement

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At Just Shutters, we are different; we care, take responsibility, and are dedicated to craftsmanship, high design standards, and excellent service.

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- *www.justshutters.co.uk*
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Established in 1798, R. Moulding & Co is an eighth-generation family owned and managed business, specialising in high-end residential building projects. The work varies from large multi-million-pound country house schemes, to smaller residential extensions or renovations.

As one of the few specialist companies in the region with the experience, skills, and scale to be able to deliver such a range of projects, we are renowned and respected for the quality and service we provide.

We combine traditional building skills, passed down through generations, with modern day techniques and materials to fulfil the lifestyle aspirations of the owners.

- *www.mouldingthebuilder.co.uk*

The long view - our story by Sofas & Stuff

A family-owned and family-run company, Sofas & Stuff's approach to furniture and fabric design is framed by the long view, where new designs are introduced, not in response to passing trends, but because of their intrinsic beauty, comfort and utility.

Sofas & Stuff's story began in 2009 when Founder, Andrew Cussins, noticed a gap in the market for handmade, bespoke British sofas, chairs and beds, offering customers a high level of choice and individual creativity. Selling its bespoke pieces through 23 highly individual and characterful showrooms across the country, as well as online, all the sofas, chairs and beds are handmade to order by skilled craftspeople here in Britain.

Fine quality fabrics lie at the very heart of what the company does best. The remarkable range includes collections created by, or exclusively for, Sofas & Stuff. These include the brand's unique and varied cloth range and distinctive woven and printed linens as well as collaborations with the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). These sit alongside collections from celebrated British and international fabric houses.

Built to last, each made-to-order piece is individually and authentically designed to suit your lifestyle, enhance your home, and give you comfort for many years to come.

- *www.sofasandstuff.com. Telephone the Salisbury showroom: 01722 280131.*

Digger & Mojo

Their emporium and workshops are Wiltshire's one stop shop service for antique and vintage interiors. Based at Woodborough Garden Centre in the Pewsey Vale, their vast showrooms, open for browsing and shopping Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, have a wide selection of furniture, soft furnishings, lighting, objets and statement pieces, rugs, kilims, mirrors, paintings and prints, and smaller gift items and collectables.

The team in their repair shops offer antique restoration, reupholstery, caning, rushing, and painting your furniture, or their stock, using a variety of techniques. Restoration ranges from restoring top end antique items of all periods to sanding a kitchen table top or re-glueing wobbly chairs.

They also offer a Props for Properties service, a bespoke furnishing service for property owners looking to sell or rent out a house or flat. After an initial visit to the property, they furnish it with furniture, rugs, lighting, mirrors, and art to give it character and style, show it off to its best advantage, and transform a dull empty box into an appealing more marketable proposition. Items can be left in situ just for estate agents' photographs, or longer term hired by the week until your property has a confirmed buyer or tenant.

- *www.diggerandmojo.com call 01672 851 510 or email ask@diggerandmojo.com*

Semley Auctioneers

Since opening in 1990 Semley Auctioneers has grown from one small saleroom of just 1,200 square feet to some 6,000 square feet over two salerooms, with a further office in Old Brompton Road, South Kensington and, more recently, a new office in the centre of Wimborne Minster, Dorset.

In the intervening 33 years the antiques business has seen remarkable changes, some brought about by the fickleness of fashion, others through socio-economic factors. The advent of the internet has heralded an era of global markets, with all the difficulties of language, customs and payments that come with international dealings, but with the advantage of achieving much higher auction prices.

This family business holds monthly specialist sales covering the whole field of antiques and fine art, including five annual sales of Jewellery & Silver, and a further four annual sales of Chinese, Japanese, Indian & Islamic Ceramics & Works of Art. Notable results in this field include a Japanese bronze vase by Shoami Katsuyoshi at £92,000 and a Chinese Yongzheng mark and period reverse decorated bowl at £ 84,000, whereas recent silver successes include the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty cup by Tiffany, New York, which brought £ 72,000.

Auction sales are held on Saturdays and are illustrated on three separate websites, with two simultaneous live bidding platforms. Enquiries regarding consigning items for sale or valuation, either at home, at the salerooms, or at the Wimborne office should be directed to Paul Strange at the Wiltshire saleroom office or Kath Barber at the Wimborne office. For valuations and collections in the Home Counties, London or at the South Kensington office please contact Simon Pearce on 0207 591 0159.

- *www.semleyauctioneers.com*

Carlo Giuliano (1831-1895) an amethyst, moonstone and enamel fringe necklace, circa 1890. Sold for £27,000.

Bee
CONSTRUCTION (WILTSHIRE)
www.beeconstructionwiltshire.co.uk

Bee Construction

With 30 years' experience covering Wiltshire and the surrounding areas, Bee Construction is a local, family-run business offering a range of building services from design and planning, drainage, groundworks, site engineering and extensions through to full house builds.

Having completed his Building Apprenticeship in 1992, Bee Construction's founder; Shaun Baker went on to work for a number of local building contractors to grow and expand his knowledge and experience, before setting up on his own in 2000.

Shaun, who grew up in Devizes now runs the business with his wife, Lisa and together with a small pool of trusted trades, they are able to offer a friendly, reliable and personal service.

Shaun continues to be at the heart of every project undertaken; personally completing all initial discussions and quotes, he will then be on-site to oversee the setting out and main build activities. Shaun also manages and monitors the work of any sub-contractors enlisted.

The team at Bee Construction understand that every project is different, they offer a range of services and would be happy to discuss your personal or bespoke requirements.

- *Bee Construction is fully insured and you can read more about their experience at their website; www.beeconstructionwiltshire.co.uk*

Upton Tree Services

The company was founded in Dorset and over the years has grown into the area's leading tree and forestry company. We have serviced customers throughout Wiltshire for many years, and with the opening our dedicated Wiltshire depot we have expanded our delivery of residential and commercial tree services across the county.

We pride ourselves on being able to offer the complete package; from tree planting to tree protection fencing and everything in between. The services we offer to our clients are second to none, from the initial contact to project delivery. Our own specialist equipment, sawmill facilities, large team and network of trusted contractors all combine to enable us to deliver comprehensive projects, on time and in budget, at the most competitive of prices.

We offer comprehensive tree and forestry services from our dedicated Wiltshire depot, serving Salisbury, Amesbury, Warminster, Devizes, Marlborough, Chippenham and the rest of Wiltshire. Whether you are a residential customer looking for hedge trimming or tree work, or a commercial client seeking a professional tree and forestry company to work with, we have the expertise, experience and equipment to help.

- *01380 825134*
  wilts@uptonltd.co.uk
  www.treesurgerywilts.co.uk

David Long Garden Design

My first gardening memories are sitting in my great grandfather's garden in Badminton. It was immaculate, with vegetables and bedding plants set out with military precision. Harvesting all the produce was such a treat and a reward for all the patience and hard work…I was hooked.

Working within the landscape and horticultural industry for more than 20 years my passion for gardening continues to grow. I started out running my own landscape construction company before moving into managing private gardens and estate management.

Gardens, no matter the size, are such an important part of any property. They can offer so much - a place of sanctuary, to spend time with family or a space for entertaining. I enjoy creating unique spaces to meet clients' requirements whilst always considering the natural surrounding landscape.

I offer all aspects of landscape and garden consultation and design. Whether it is rearranging an existing border, designing a planting plan or a complete garden design and renovation, I work collaboratively with clients to deliver a garden which suits their needs.

I would love to hear from you to discuss your garden requirements so that it can be transformed into a place for you to enjoy.

- *www.davidlonggardendesign.co.uk*
  Email: studio@davidlonggardens.co.uk
  Telephone: 01725 514622

Wansbroughs advice: Home is where the tax relief is

Kathryn Smith Cowap, a Partner at Wansbroughs discusses tax-relief for homeowners.

Our homes are often our most valuable assets and with them, they may bring potentially valuable tax relief.

What is it?

The Residence Nil Rate Band (RNRB) is a tax-relief available to the estates of deceased UK homeowners who have left their property in their will, or as part of an intestacy, to a direct descendant on their death.

Who are direct descendants?

- child (including step-children, and adopted children), grandchild or other linear descendant;
- spouse or civil partner of a linear descendant

But, this does not include:

- nieces or nephews;
- siblings.

How much relief is available?

The RNRB is currently capped at £175,000 for estates worth less than £2million. The amount of RNRB available is reduced by £1 for every£2 by which the estate is worth over £2million. The RNRB may also be transferred between spouses and both allowances used on the second death if it was not previously claimed, creating a combined relief of £350,000.

How can I claim it?

This is a tax-relief which must be claimed directly from HMRC during the administration of an estate.

- *If you would like more advice regarding the RNRB or other tax planning, please contact Wansbroughs' Private Client Team at wealth@wansbroughs.com.*

Spring into action

With spring beginning to blossom and longer hours of daylight, this can be a time of year when you have more energy, more positivity and greater enthusiasm to get out and get more active. The leisure services team at Wiltshire Council look at all the options on offer on here the doorstep.

WILTSHIRE OFFERS a huge potential to explore, move more and discover new places, new activities, or new interests.

Whatever your health, age or level of fitness it is never too late to be more active, and the benefits can still have a life changing effect. Regular exercise helps your brain, heart, lungs, muscles and bones stay healthy, and keeps your body strong and supple[1]. It can make a big difference to your quality of life by improving your mood, boosting your confidence and self-esteem, giving you a sense of achievement and helping you relax and relieve stress.

Wiltshire boasts many miles of footpaths, by-ways and bridleways to discover the county by walking, trail running or cycling and many incredible views to soak up along the way. This is a great way to spend time with family and friends, and you can make a day of it too with a picnic. There are a large number of resources online sharing routes, advice and information if you are looking to get out and about and a good starting point is the Visit Wiltshire website: www.visitwiltshire.co.uk

Joining a sports club can help you to meet other like-minded people and potentially rekindle an interest that you had as a younger person. Many sports clubs are welcoming, friendly places and are keen to open their doors to those coming back to the sport or starting out for the first time.

While most provide competitive opportunities for those that want to test themselves against others, many sports have invested in their grass roots offer for participants and offer much less intense versions of the game. You can get involved in walking football activities, touch rugby or social badminton sessions more now than ever before.

If you are looking to get fit for the summer, and perhaps with a holiday in mind, you might be thinking of joining a local gym or leisure centre. This can be quite an intimidating experience, but the benefits can far outweigh that initial anxiety. Often, once you've taken that first step, you'll find the support from staff and the feeling of accomplishment far more encouraging.

You will also find all sorts of options open to you. Leisure centres offer swimming sessions, gym, a wide variety of group exercise classes, racket sports and are often the base for walking or running groups, as well as being home to many local sports clubs. If you are the kind of person who needs that extra motivation to attend, then joining a group exercise class can be a great experience with a passionate and inspirational instructor.

At Wiltshire Council leisure centres, our aim is to promote general wellbeing, by providing a safe and supportive environment for the whole community to feel welcome and encouraged to visit us.

Our staff are here to help you, encourage you, motivate you and support you towards achieving your aims or goals in terms of fitness; whether that be getting the shape you're looking for, losing weight, training for an event or simply being happy with your body. We have a variety of flexible membership options available to suit your needs, and the ability to use all 20 leisure centres under the terms of your membership. You could even try a number of group exercise classes at home before you commit to a 'live' experience with a Wiltshire Council virtual studio membership for just £5 per month.

With a friendly feel to our centres, you will be made welcome whatever age you are and however fit, or unfit, you think you are.

- *For more information on leisure centres in Wiltshire, go to: https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/leisure. You can also find details of the countywide Get Wiltshire Walking scheme, as well as information on our Active Health GP referral scheme, swimming lessons and lots more.*

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1. Independent Age https://www.independentage.org/

Changing lives

Julia's House has been providing life-changing care and support to the most seriously ill children and their families for the last 20 years, and on the ground providing critical care in Wiltshire for 10 years. Care that is essential for families struggling to cope, but would never have been there, if it wasn't for Julia's House.

Ted, Carmela and Abigail enjoying the time they spend with the support team of carers and nurses at Julia's House.

JULIA'S HOUSE nurses and carers are there for the whole family - from a child with highly complex medical needs or a sibling who needs someone to share their difficult world, to parents and grandparents who are struggling to cope with the challenges of caring 24/7. Families don't get this kind of individually-tailored care anywhere else.

The need for Julia's House is growing, but the funding isn't

More children are being born and living longer with complex life-limiting conditions due to medical and scientific advances, so Julia's House will be caring for more children for longer. More children, more families, more complex care means their service has to expand to meet these needs and their costs will inevitably increase, so your continued support is vital to their future. A recent study conducted by the University of York, revealed that the number of children in England with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions increased from 32,975 in 2001/2 to over 86,625 in 2017/18*.

Julia's House never wants to have to turn an exhausted family away and wants to ensure they are there for them before they reach breaking point.

"No matter how strong you are, it's not until you're put in a position like ours that you realise how fundamental children's hospices like Julia's House are for your wellbeing" said a Julia's House parent.

You can help shape future care

You can play a vital role in ensuring the most seriously ill children and their families in your community are not alone. By leaving Julia's House a gift in your will, your pledge of support will be vital in providing families with the help they need to navigate the stress and exhaustion of round the clock care. You can be their lifeline of care.

"Julia's House is like a safety net ready to catch the family, a lifeline. They know they can always call on us," says Claire Hudson-Cooper, director of care at Julia's House. "The children we care for have increasingly complex needs; it's vital that we look to the future to meet these needs. We will continue to respond to the children and the complexities of their conditions, providing expert respite care for the increasing number of children in Wiltshire and Dorset who are living longer due to medical advances."

Julia's House relies almost entirely on generous donations from the local community to fund the charity's vital care for families across Wiltshire and Dorset, receiving just eight per cent government funding.

When you pledge to leave a gift in your will to Julia's House you are making an amazing decision to help local families who are facing the most unimaginable sadness – the knowledge that their child may not survive into adulthood.

"You hear about children all over the world dying suddenly, so I think we're lucky really. I believe in just taking each day as it comes and if that moment comes, it's just how it's going to be." A Julia's House mum.

Incredibly, one in four of the children that Julia's House cares for are funded by gifts in wills. It's a wonderful way of showing local families you care and gives Julia's House the confidence needed to continue to provide vital care and develop the service long into the future.

With their free will writing service, leaving a gift in your will costs you nothing now. Help create lasting memories for a family whose time together is short and be remembered for the smiles you create.

- *Leave your gift of care at juliashouse.org/legacy*

**Make Every Child Count study, conducted by the University of York, www.togetherforshortlives.org.uk/new-research-reveals-a-significant-rise-in-the-number-of-children-with-life-limitingconditions/*

20 YEARS
A LIFELINE OF
CARE

Julia's House
Wiltshire & Dorset Children's Hospices

Will your legacy be Ellie's *Smile?*

We've been there for local families over the last 20 years providing a lifeline of support. Help shape their future care with a Gift in your Will.

A gift of just 1% in your Will could make 100% difference to families like Ellie's.

Visit juliashouse.org/legacy
or call 01202 644220

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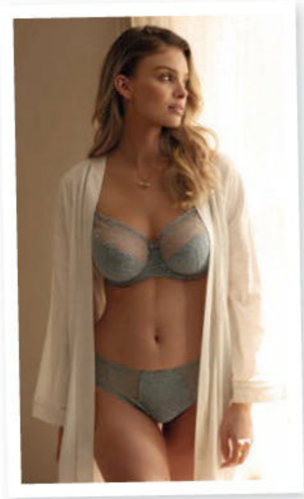
Kayaking on the River Avon, Bradford-on-Avon

Being independent

Discover independent shops and businesses offering the finest customer service.

Annie's Just Jane



Annie's Just Jane is a bra fitting and swimwear specialist shop in Salisbury, that has been trading since 1970. Those that have visited over the years will remember the famous 'Just Jane jiggle', some might even call it an 'institution' in the area. You may have seen it on BBC 1, this time last year as it featured on Interior Design Masters - Series 4 with Alan Carr with two other shops in Salisbury being made over.

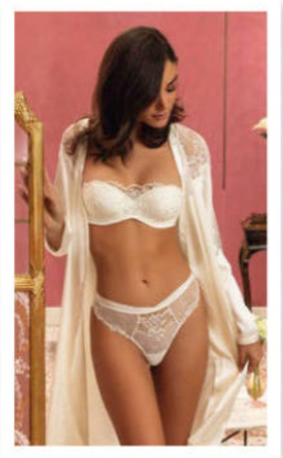
At the end of 2017, the shop relocated from 28 Milford Street to its current location 7 St John Street (next to the Chapter House Hotel & Restaurant) where it has done its best to survive both the Salisbury poisonings and Covid. Post-Covid it now offers an online booking service and has reduced its opening hours to just Wed to Sat 10am-5pm, seeing how it will fare in the ever-changing high-street environment. The TV makeover has really transformed the shop experience and it hopes to delight customers both old and new.

The bra fitting service, focuses on finding customers a great fitting everyday bra, that the online world is struggling to find a solution for. They 'fit' rather than 'measure', because how a bra fits depends on the brand and style, you cannot always go by the size.

An area they are keen to raise awareness of is their post-surgery and mastectomy bras and swimwear. Shapewear and swimwear is also a good part of their offering. They have more than 700 swimsuits and bikinis stocked all year round. And as everyone looks to escape the April showers, they are hoping for a busy summer.

- *Opening Times: Wednesday to Saturday - 10am - 5pm*
  Book bra fitting today:
  www.anniesjustjane.co.uk
  Email: anniearthey@gmail.com
  Telephone: 01722 328704
  Annie's Just Jane, 7 St. John Str, Salisbury. SP1 2SB

Amélie Lingerie



For around 20 years, Emily worked as a Norland Nanny and maternity nurse, having travelled far and wide: living in the Middle East, the Far East, the Swiss mountains and London, whilst travelling frequently elsewhere for extended periods at short notice. She found that she often gravitated towards beautiful small boutiques - ones tucked away and where you find wonderful service and beautifully curated things. From there, the seed was planted.

Fast forward to autumn 2022 and Emily found herself in the position to bring her dream to life. The boutique is tucked away in the market town of Devizes and has steadily grown a following via word of mouth since opening Emily says: "I want Amélie to be a place that all women are made to feel welcome in. A nurturing place of inclusivity where open dialogue is encouraged. Come in, have some herbal tea and explore the lingerie and accessories on offer before having a bra fitting".

With more than 25 brands carried, including exquisite pieces from Lisé Charmel, Aubade & Simone Pérèle. Mascetomy bras from Anita, Royce and newcomer Skarlette. Silks from Clara Rossi, Alice Acreman, Jessica Russell Flint (vegan silk), Shell Belle Couture and in house label Amélie. Swim and resort wear are carried year-round.

- *The website is in development, further information is on the Instagram page @amelielingeriedevizes*
  Amélie Lingerie, 20 High Street. Devizes.
  Telephone: 01380 293182

Vivien Sheriff

Vivien Sheriff is a luxury headwear brand offering women's designer hats and headpieces including wedding and racing hats, headbands, Panama hats and bridal headwear. They specialise in creating each piece uniquely by hand in their Wiltshire studios.

The converted farm buildings which have been home to the millinery brand for more than 20 years are surrounded by acres of vineyards, and troops of velvet pheasants, a setting which often filters down into the milliner's undeniably English creations.

Above all else, the Vivien Sheriff brand evokes luxurious craftsmanship and expertise, being stocked in Harrods and some of the best stores worldwide. As effortlessly stylish as they are, it takes weeks of unfaltering work to produce each of their extraordinary handmade pieces.

"We love working with mothers of the bride and groom in our studio with their outfits for their big day, to create a truly wonderful piece to suit their face shape, hair style, stature and to match their outfits. Later in the season we will be working with the racegoers on spectacular pieces for Royal Ascot and Glorious Goodwood"

The team are excited to be working on a number of high-profile commissions for the forthcoming coronation which they will be able to reveal on the great itself.

Vivien Sheriff has also been focussing on their Ready-to-Wear collection VIXEN which is a lower price point but still designed and made by the team; prices from £100 and is also available to rent.

They are keen supporters of sustainable fashion and have many past collections available to hire from their studio in Downton, near Salisbury.

- *To make an appointment please call the studio 01725 512983 or email info@viviensheriff.co.uk*
  Visit the website https://viviensheriff.co.uk

Tel: 01380 293182 @amelielingeriedevizes
10am - 5pm - **Tuesday to Friday**
Appointment only - **Sunday and Monday**
(Out of hours appointments available on request)
20 High street | Devizes | SN10 1AT

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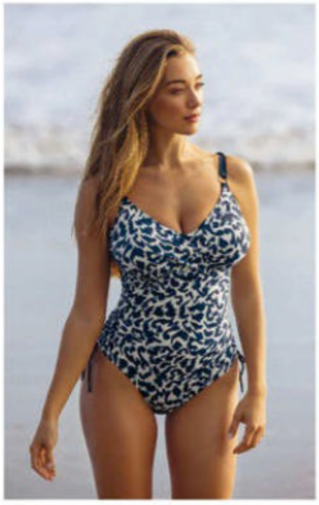

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www.anniesjustjane.co.uk

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WILTSHIRE LIFE

AWARDS 2023

Celebrating excellence across the county

10 March 2023, The Corn Exchange, Devizes

Contents and introduction

Contents

60 Meet the Judges
63 Community Group of the Year
65 Teacher/Coach of the Year
67 Business of the Year
69 Independent Food/Drink Producer of the Year
71 Conservation Project of the Year
73 Charity of the Year
75 Pub of the Year
77 The Green Business Award
79 Young Entrepreneur of the Year
81 Young Sports Personality of the Year
83 Independent Retailer of the Year, *incorporating Farm/Village Shop*
85 Local Hero of the Year
87 Apprentice of the Year
89 The Arts, Culture & Music Award
91 Lifetime Achievement Award
93 Pride of Wiltshire Award
94 Thanks to our suppliers
96 Photos from the night/Ceremony

Introduction Caroline Hole-Jones

Where has it gone? This last year has been a roller coaster of epic proportions.

It's now more than 12 months since Russia declared its 'special military operation' in Ukraine, with far-reaching implications across the world.

A year of galloping inflation, mind-boggling energy, fuel, and staple grocery cost increases and don't let's forget the political horrors and revolving doors in Westminster that, on reflection - we probably would rather forget! And late 2022 saw a very poignant landmark in history with the death of our country's longest ruling monarch, Queen Elizabeth II.

Despite unprecedented challenges that many people have faced during the last 12 months, and make no mistake, there have been plenty of 'dark days' for a lot of people, our heroes within the county have shone through and left us humbled and inspired with their incredible achievements.

Sometimes it is the simplest acts of kindness which impact on us the most.

As a judge, I can say that judging the 2023 awards was probably the hardest yet. We had record numbers of entries in certain categories including Charity of the Year.

Can you imagine how difficult it is to judge dozens of charities who all undertake totally incredible work. Whether working with children in need, in mental health, with those living with dementia, cancer or end of life care, animals, refugees, or families who live in poverty, or environmental causes it is impossible to judge like with like. We could have awarded more than 20 charities with an honorary award and because that wasn't possible, I would very much like to pay tribute to all the nominations in this category and to the immense work that they do.

I have singled out the charities in the knowledge of how hard this particular category was for our judges. But it's also fair to say that we were captivated by the nominations in all our categories. People who put the needs of others above their own, providing desperately needed help to those in communities where no formal help was available, and those who gave their time to willingly make a real difference.

We were inspired by entrepreneurial flair and business success in the county along with community stores, pubs and businesses that have emerged from the pandemic and adjusted to new and challenging trading conditions. Businesses which are thriving against all odds.

And as climate change becomes more central to the household agenda, we were moved by the innovation and sustainability initiatives that have been underway in the county – leaving us in no doubt that people genuinely care.

Wiltshire is a county of many talents, and no awards would be complete without recognition of our arts, music, and sport culture that brings joy to so many and that is spread across the county.

I'd also like to thank the *Wiltshire Life* team which dedicates many hours of hard work to making the awards such a success – we know it doesn't happen by magic and greatly appreciate the commitment that goes into organising the awards and the awards dinner itself.

And an especially big thank you to our judges who give their time willingly and are an inspiration in themselves. Their knowledge and expertise are enormously valued, and it is no mean feat to judge well over a 100 nominations where everyone has to dig deep to establish our winners.

To our winners – we would all say a huge congratulations. You really are exemplars within our county that we can be proud of....

Meet the Judges

The *Wiltshire Life* Awards 2023 has been brought to you by a panel of experienced judges. Here, we find out more about them.

Chair Caroline Hole-Jones

Caroline founded boutique communications agency Splash Communications in 1996, specialising in food and hospitality and employment, winning industry accolades. Following its acquisition in 2016, she formed The Word Consultancy, and the Canny Group specialising in food, hospitality and public affairs marketing. She is a 'hands on' investor in Spanish fine food company, Mevalco, supplying products to leading UK chefs and restaurants.

Nicky Alberry

In 1991 Nicky came to work at GWE in Swindon. Almost 30 years later she is still involved in the company, now known as Business West. Nicky has sat on many boards and partnerships, including, Wiltshire Community Foundation and Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Partnership and is currently chair of Swindon Domestic Abuse Support Service. Nicky is a deputy lieutenant, and was also High Sheriff in 2018/19.

Lynsey Docherty

Lynsey is an opera singer, concert producer and vocal animateur. As a community music ambassador she has created singing and educational music projects in diverse environments, often as therapy for under privileged and vulnerable people. Lynsey is the founder and artistic director of Celebrate Voice, a festival featuring international artists with a thriving community programme, based in Salisbury.

Colin Elwell

Colin is a partner of Evelyn Partners Investment Management and manages private client, trust and charity portfolios. Colin served in the Reserve Army for 25 years including two years attached to the Regulars before starting his career in investment management in 1998 at NCL Investments, now Evelyn Partners. He is chairman of the Yeomanry Benevolent Fund and of the Wiltshire GWCT committee.

Rose Eva

Rose is a sculptor and writer on the arts. She studied history of art at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London, and was a specialist at Phillips fine art auctioneers in London and the director of Phillips Germany. She has curated exhibitions and has written catalogues for both galleries and museums. As a sculptor she has won competitions and awards with her work, including the Discerning Eye Humphreys Prize in 2015.

Nicholas Fogg

Nicholas is a Fellow of Queen's University. He has authored several books; his biography of William Shakespeare, has gone into its sixth edition. Nick is a long-standing contributor to *Wiltshire Life*, and writes regularly in the national press. He worked on the Middle East peace processes and is an advisor to the council for ex-heads of state and government. Twice the mayor of Marlborough, he launched the town's jazz and literary festivals.

Georgie Green

Georgie is a Wiltshire girl, born in Malmesbury and having spent a brief time in the west of the county, she now calls the south of the county home. She worked at Salisbury Playhouse and then for BBC Wiltshire as a journalist, presenting a daily breakfast news programme from the heart of Salisbury. Georgie has a true understanding of Wiltshire and the people who make up this wonderful county.

Victoria Nye

Victoria's career was in investment management. She co-founded a charity, Young Money, to facilitate financial education in schools and helped set up Investment 20/20 an award-winning trainee programme for young people. She is chair of governors for the Springfields Academy, a SEN school in Calne and Salisbury. Victoria helps the Wiltshire Community Foundation and she is a deputy lieutenant.

James Phipps

After winning Wiltshire Business Person of the Year twice, Swindon born James is now largely retired from business, having grown several businesses like Excalibur, a *Times* Top Tech 100 Employer. He still invests in and mentors several businesses. His passion is helping local charities. He is on the board of Wiltshire Air Ambulance and Platform Project. He is co-founder of a charitable foundation for young people in Swindon, Wiltshire and Kenya.

Charles Spencer

Charles has spent the last 36 years managing the family farm. In addition to expanding the mixed farming business he has converted old buildings into business premises, to increase employment opportunities in the area. He sits on various committees in the local community, including chairing the parish council. Charles has recently hung up his rugby boots after playing for a local team for the last 20 years, but continues to enjoy both tennis and cricket.

Ram Thiagarajah

Ram, a retired civil engineer, is passionate about helping those in need. He has been president of the Swindon Tamil Association since 2006, being instrumental in helping the Tamil community integrate into Swindon. He is a trustee of Voluntary Action Swindon and the Swindon Hindu Temple Trust. He has been a trustee of Breakfast Plus, a homeless charity and Wiltshire Community Foundation. He is a deputy lieutenant.

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At Wiltshire Community Foundation we're passionate about Wiltshire, its people and its communities. For many Wiltshire is a great place to live. However, for others its attractiveness masks pockets of real deprivation and hardship.

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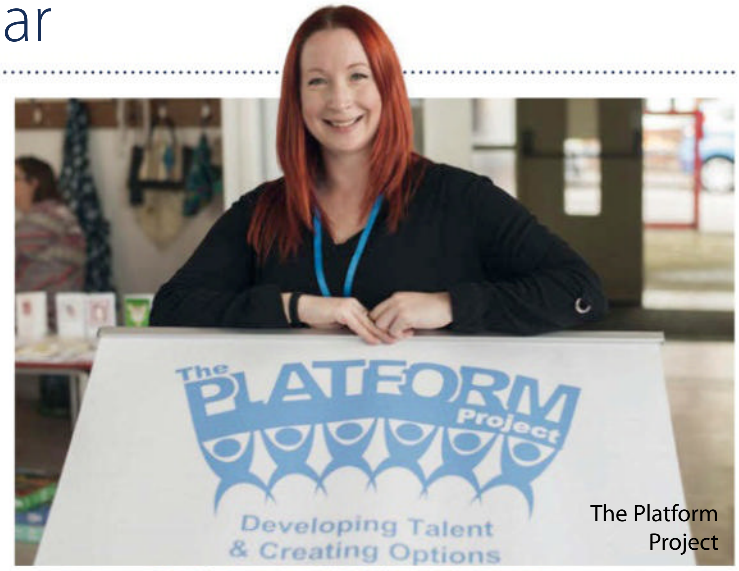
Community Group of the Year

Wiltshire & Swindon Credit Union



The Platform Project

(Joint) Winner Wiltshire & Swindon Credit Union *Swindon*

Wiltshire and Swindon Credit Union is a not-for-profit, community interest company owned by its 3,000 members and run on their behalf. It is regulated by the Bank of England and provides affordable loans to people who are unable to get credit elsewhere to prevent them from going to payday loan companies or even loan sharks. Members open savings accounts and, provided they meet loan criteria, can take out loans which are repaid monthly. Most loans are for unexpected costs such as car repairs or replacing white goods. Last year it offered almost 3,000 loans, totalling £1.4 million – a 30 per cent year on year increase. It also encourages members to save regularly to set them on a path to better financial security.

(Joint) Winner The Platform Project CIC *Swindon*

The Platform Project aims to reduce youth unemployment by working with local authorities, schools, colleges and employers to help disadvantaged and vulnerable young people develop into work ready, capable and confident entry level talent. Its training workplace environment encourages them to start mini businesses such as fashion upcyling, jewellery making or digital media. Through close support they gain skills and experience – and the confidence to make more informed choices about their chosen career options. The training helps them break down any barriers that are preventing them from transitioning into and succeeding in further education, paid work or self-employment. The group also works with students who have challenges such as ADHD, autism or social anxiety to increase their engagement in school.

Third place Harnham Community Network *Salisbury*

Harnham Community Network is made up of 11 organisations and 99 individual members who work together for the benefit of the community in Harnham. Among its regular activities are a Harvest Table where growers can share surplus produce, a twice weekly coffee and chat morning, a seed exchange, wellbeing and nature walks, recycling of items not collected by the council and an art competition and workshop. The network organised Platinum Jubilee events as well as shopping for volunteers during the pandemic.

> **“It also encourages members to save regularly to set them on a path to better financial security”**

> **“Through close support they gain skills and experience and the confidence to make more informed choices”**

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Teacher/Coach of the Year

Winner Caroline Radcliffe *Warminster*

Singing teacher Caroline Radcliffe has been leading weekly Music for the Mind groups in Bradford on Avon and Westbury for Alzheimer's Support for more than 12 years. In that time scores of people living with dementia and their carers have benefitted from her skilled approach, musicality and compassion. Her groups are not just singalongs, they learn new songs, musical concepts and styles, practise harmonies and learn new words. Much of this is down to the extraordinary power of music to 'unlock' parts of the brain, but much is to do with Caroline's approach. She treats her dementia groups like any other choir, starting with physical and vocal warm-ups, teaching new material in short sections, introducing challenge in the form of partner songs, rounds and harmonies and expecting high standards from her singers. The results are remarkable and profound, and all done with humour, great respect for her singers and a deep understanding of the challenges they face. Volunteer Wendy O'Grady says of her: "Caroline makes every session stimulating and fun and everyone leaves the room feeling valued and happy."

Second place Liam Abram Smith *Ludgershall*

Liam Abram Smith is the founder, choreographer and teacher of Showoff Dance in Tidworth He brings people of all ages, shapes sizes and backgrounds together through his dance classes and his easy nature puts people at ease from the moment they walk through the door. The little ones adore his over exuberant, larger than life character but no matter what age, he has the same effect on everyone. He inspires loyalty and respect and passion in all his dance family.

Third place Shelley Hills *Salisbury*

Shelley Hills has been a childminder for more than 23 years and has looked after dozens of children. Many have stayed in touch, even those who have moved to Scotland and further. After combining the job with being a mum herself, she is now a granny. She continued childminding throughout the pandemic so that frontline staff could. work. She is also helps many other childminders through a support group she runs. She was awarded an 'Outstanding' Ofsted grading last September.

> **"The results are extraordinary and profound, and all done with humour and great respect for her singers"**

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Business of the Year

PerfectPet

Winner Perfect Pet Insurance *Salisbury*

Perfect Pet Insurance uses technology to create richer and more meaningful customer experiences. Its primary goal is to grow its customer base through new sales and customer retention, ensuring existing customers are offered the best price for renewal – while being commercially aware of profitability of the business. Growth and retention are carefully planned to ensure product pricing is competitive and comparable to larger insurers. Being relatively small and agile means pricing can be adjusted and changed in line with seasonal trends to maximise sales opportunities. The company, whose customer base has increased from 50,000 in 2021 to a predicted 70,000 at the end of 2022, views its 60 staff as its true asset and aims to be an employer of choice in Salisbury by building an outstanding brand and crafting a fun and productive culture. Being passionate about pet and people welfare, the company was proud to partner with Underdog International in its effort to provide food, water and medication to animal shelters and help those in the Ukraine who fled the war and had to leave their beloved pets behind.

> **"The company views its staff as a true asset and aims to be an employer of choice in Salisbury"**

Second place Blue Bee *Salisbury*

Design agency Blue Bee marked its ninth birthday by opening a new office in Dubai, to build on the success of a Salisbury base that saw a 20 per cent year on year growth. Its clients include the NHS, Public Health England and the British Army and it helped develop the visuals for daily presentations of Covid-19 statistics to SAGE and Cobra meetings for the UK Government during the pandemic. The team is currently working on its own Research and Development software project.

Third place Milk & Tweed *Chippenham*

Chippenham creative agency Milk & Tweed prides itself on excellent customer service and a great office culture to inspire innovative branding, website creation, SEO and digital marketing. The company has won business all over the country, often over much larger agencies, because of its personal approach. Its social responsibility is evident in its pledge to plant a tree for each new client and its fundraising support the Royal United Hospital in Bath and charities, including the Youth Adventure Trust and Springboard.

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Independent Food/Drink Producer of the Year

Hollychocs

Winner Hollychocs *Devizes*

Holly Garner left a dream job in production at Cadbury's to launch her own ethical chocolate company with her husband Sam in 2019. The eggs, milk, cream, and butter used to make the high cocoa and low sugar products come from Wiltshire and Somerset farms. The cocoa and all the packaging is ethically sourced and there are plans to introduce bespoke packaging without plastic. Waste is kept to a minimum and the chocolate is produced in a way that requires no artificial additives. The business had to adapt to lockdown and Holly found a winning formula by producing monthly special edition chocolate boxes with new themed flavours each month. Last year's rising raw material and energy costs presented the business with a challenge but Holly adapted again, keeping her customers fully informed through her blog. The customer relationship is important and with 55 five star reviews on Google and 71 on Facebook the approach is obviously working. One customer revealed she loves the chocolates so much she hides them in her sock drawer so that she doesn't have to share them.

> **"The chocolate is produced in a way that requires no artificial additives"**

Second place BRAVE Chutney *Manningford Bohune*

Brave Chutney is an independent chutney business run from owner Milly Woodard's kitchen in Manningford Bohune supplying farm shops, cafés, delis, stores and pubs in the Vale of Pewsey. Her five chutneys and seasonal jellies are made from locally grown fruit and veg, some of which are from Milly's own garden, or Wiltshire's hedgerows. The business dovetails neatly with suppliers like Central Fruits. Milly turns its produce into chutneys and sells them on its website alongside its fruit and veg boxes.

Third place Downton Distillery *Downton*

Downton Distillery works with other businesses such as chocolatier Miss Witt, Roly's Fudge and Offbeat Wines, often using by-products that would otherwise go to waste to flavour gins and vodkas. Cocktail classes at The Goat and with Miss Witt have brought extra footfall, while a partnership with James May to produce his gin range is a continuing success. A link-up with the National Spitfire Project to create Six Aces Gin will celebrate wartime air aces and raise money for the charity.

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Conservation Project of the Year

Winner Wiltshire Wildlife Trust – Taking Action For Insects *Devizes*

Taking Action for Insects is funded by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund at more than 30 reserves and other locations and is improving a variety of habitats enabling more insects to flourish. The project will deliver lasting transformation of key wildlife sites, many of which have projective designations because of how important they are for wildlife. It not only benefits insects but underpins nature's recovery as a whole – invertebrates are the basis of a myriad of food webs supporting a wide range of bats, birds, fish, mammals, and other species. Among the measures are creating wildflower strips in meadows, trialling the use of NoFence collars on cattle to control grazing, and creating wet habitats along the Hampshire Avon in the Pewsey Vale for plants and invertebrates. More than 60 volunteers have worked on the project, which has raised awareness about the dramatic decline in insect numbers and what can be done to reverse it.

> **"It not only benefits insects but underpins nature's recovery as a whole"**

Second place The Dinton Daffodil Project *Dinton*

The Dinton Daffodil Project recreated a spectacular vista of rare daffodils around Little Clarendon in Dinton, first created by Rev George Herbert Engleheart and his wife in 1901. Engleheart created more than 700 varieties and the remnants of his work can still be found in the village. Volunteers raised enough money to buy to buy 400 Engleheart daffodil bulbs to plant around the village. There are plans to carry on planting and create a Dinton Daffodil Festival to celebrate his legacy.

Third place Salisbury Cathedral's East Gable Pinnacles *Salisbury*

A year-long project to restore Salisbury Cathedral's east gable pinnacles was urgently needed because one of the 20ft tall, 20 tonne pinnacles was leaning dangerously and had to be dismantled and repaired with new stone. Once carved, the shaped stones were transported hundreds of feet up onto the scaffolding, where the structures were rebuilt. The carving was done using modern tools but with methods almost identical to the work done by stonemasons when the cathedral was built in the 13th century.

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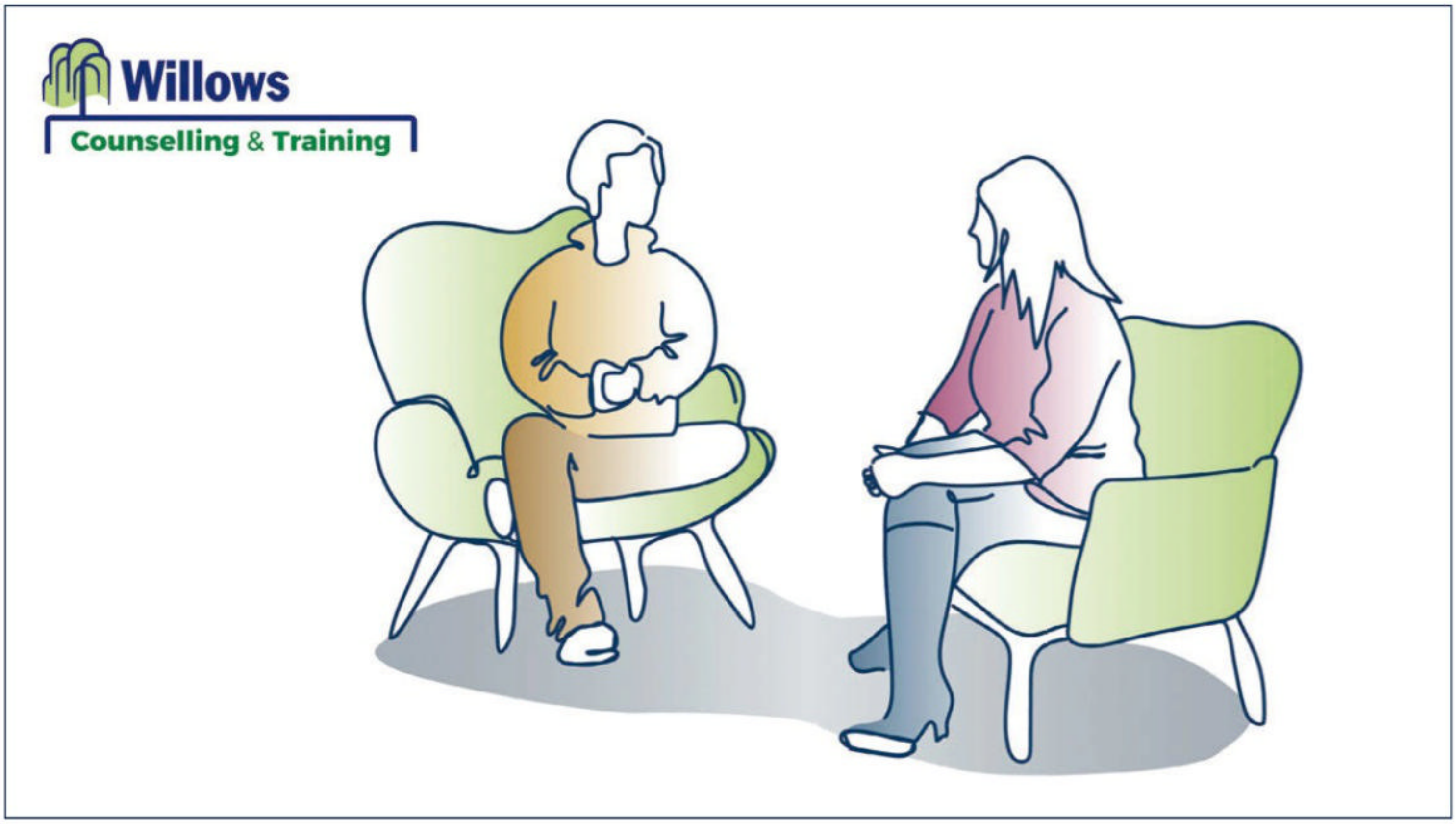

Winner Willows Counselling and Training *Swindon*

Established for more than 32 years, Willows offers one-to-one counselling support for adults facing a wide range of mental health difficulties in Swindon and Wiltshire. It also specialises in counselling trauma and abuse with its complexities. Willows is a well-respected and integral part of Wiltshire's mental health counselling and counselling training landscape. Many of its clients struggle financially – often due to the impact of their mental health which has made completing education or gaining and sustaining meaningful employment very difficult. During the past year Willows has had 30 volunteer counsellors providing approximately 1,100 client sessions. The cost of private counselling is unrealistic and unaffordable but almost 80 per cent of these sessions have been financially subsidised by Willows and through grants. Willows has undertaken joint research with Bath University, which resulted in the creation of its unique Stabilisation Programme., a structured 12-week one-to-one counselling programme helping people to learn new ways to live their lives better. It has been found to reduce the overall time a person might otherwise spend in counselling.

> **"Willows is a well respected and integral part of Wiltshire's mental health counselling and counselling training landscape"**

Second place Ipsum *Swindon*

Ipsum, which provides low cost counselling and support to people in Swindon with mental health issues, has had to overcome many obstacles and has grown against the odds, going from strength to strength, due to the dedication, hard work and belief of its team. The charity has become recognised by many other professionals, as a much needed, valued support to those suffering from poor mental health and it actively makes a difference to waiting times for access to mental health support.

Third place Doing it for Dan *Swindon*

Doing it for Dan was set up by Helen Hancock in memory of her 11-year-old son Daniel Climance, who lost his life in a road traffic accident in Purton in 2015. Daniel loved sport and his family wanted to help other children achieve their sporting dreams. Since 2017 it has provided more than £100,000 in grants to more than 200 young people and organisations for sports equipment, kit and club memberships to give greater opportunities for children to participate in sport.

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Pub of the Year

The Winchester Gate
The Winchester Gate
Winchester Gate

Winner The Winchester Gate *Salisbury*

For six years Robb and Abi Blake have been transforming ‘The Winni’ into a popular and vibrant pub priding itself on being at the heart of its local community. Thanks to the regulars’ support the pub bounced back from the pandemic and continues to run an eclectic programme of free live gigs, featuring everything from folk, blues and ska to metal, punk, or rock. Then there’s the cheese club, quiz nights, art classes, poetry readings and children’s theatre. Last year the pub held its own blues, cider and falling leaf festivals. The Winni hosts regular charity fundraisers and recently held a two-day Ukraine music event, which raised more than £1,000 for Wiltshire for Ukraine. It also held a fundraising event for Salisbury Hospice Charity. The pub sources from local food producers such as Wiltshire Chilli Farm and prides itself on stocking locally scored ales including Stonehenge Ales, Hop Back, Downton, Dark Revolution and Plain Ales to name just a few. It also stocks local ciders including Cranborne Chase, New Forest Cider, Tutts Clump and Rich’s.

> **“The Winni is a popular and vibrant pub priding itself at being at the heart of its local community”**

Second place The Three Brewers *Corsham*

Kirsty and Nathan Cortilla have run this refurbished and friendly pub for almost two years and transformed it from a late night drinkers’ haunt into a thriving community hub. Aside from traditional cask ales, breakfasts and morning coffee you’ll find children’s craft sessions, quiz and blues nights, a chess club, crib league and seasonal events such as Christmas carols. They also hold charity fundraisers and take part in town events including the story and walking festivals.

Third place The Goat at Downton *Downton*

The Grade II-listed Goat is run by husband and wife team Karolina Korys-Jones and Darren Jones. Darren is executive chef while Karolina is responsible for the warm welcome behind the bar. The couple, who took over the pub three years ago, have turned it into an attractive gastro venue but retained the village pub atmosphere. The pub takes its community role seriously and supports the area’s schools, it is also part of Downton Bonfire Night, organised in its grounds by Downton Scouts.

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Winner Downton Distillery *Downton*

Downton Distillery has become Green Small Business Certified but is not resting on its laurels, benchmarking itself against B Corporation criteria. The business is passionate about being sustainable and now runs on green energy. Its 40 per cent recycled glass bottles are made in Milan and use a screen printed design free of any heavy toxic metals or dangerous solvents. In 2019 it introduced a gin refill scheme, which allows customers to bring their bottles to refill points, saving 29 per cent and saving bottles from landfill. In 2021 it launched an Explorer's Gin refill pack, which is designed to fit through a letter box. A Freepost return service means customers can send their refill packs back to the distillery for reuse or recycling. Most gin producers import their all-important juniper berries from Italy or Poland but Downton has used money from sales to fund a juniper rewilding programme on the Wiltshire Downs and it should soon be in use. The brewery has also partnered with an Icelandic company to 'lock away' its captured carbon to further reduce its footprint.

Second place Coombe Bissett Blooms *Coombe Bissett*

Caroline Welfare's floristry businesses uses a mix of perennials, annuals and bulbs grown on the family farm to avoid importing flowers from abroad. She picks flowers for arrangements from full weddings to bouquet deliveries from March to October and in the darker months uses hedgerow greens with dried flowers. Nothing goes to waste – rose petals are turned into confetti, seeds from unused blooms are resown and when possible, plants are divided and multiplied. All green waste from grass cuttings to kitchen waste is composted.

Third place Good Energy *Chippenham*

Chippenham's Good Energy gets it power from a network of 1,700 independent generators in businesses, non-profits and communities. This includes solar farms, wind turbines, hydroelectric projects and anaerobic digestion, which last year provided enough energy to power the equivalent of every home in Manchester for a year – and helped save 100,000 tonnes of carbon emissions. It has signed up to the Science Based Targets initiative and aims to cut its own emission by 50 per cent by 2030.

> **"The business is passionate about being sustainable and now runs on green energy"**

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Young Entrepreneur of the Year

Winner Ethan Davids *Hindon*

Ethan grew up above a pub and spent his summers washing up in the kitchen. He, his sister and a schoolfriend formed The Chickpea group and took on The Grosvenor Arms in Hindon, boosting its annual turnover from £300,000 to £1 million. The group has since grown to four pubs with rooms and two Nole pizza restaurants. He also teamed up with Max Halley to re-open The Five Bells in Salisbury and The Sam Wellers in Bath. The Bell & Crown in Zeals has been extensively refurnished since opening mid-2020, and the pub launched six brand new ensuite bedrooms this year. Ethan's vision is to create an environment where hard work, creativity and passion are rewarded with progression, regardless of age. Two head chefs are under 25 and The Grosvenor's assistant general manager was 18 when appointed. One of his goals is to help a member of staff open their own pub or restaurant, and the group has plans to grow in the coming years with exciting new ventures on the horizon.

> **"One of his goals is to help a member of staff open their own pub or restaurant"**

Second place Aimee Hancock *Salisbury*

Aimee is a co-director of The Immersive Group and in 2017 she and husband Dave took over and revitalised Deacons in Salisbury. Next they bought Danny's Craft Bar and relaunched it as popular Mexican restaurant Tinga. After that the former Cat Tavern was reborn as Caboose parlour bar. In December 2019 they opened Frost, a pop-up bar and annual part of Salisbury's Christmas market and a year later the City Garden bar led the city's recovery from the pandemic.

Third place Nicola Davis *Trowbridge*

Nicola started Nicola Davis Crafts as a way to keep herself occupied during a gap year after A-Levels and as a way to make some money and recover from anorexia before setting off to university to study fashion. Eight years later it is an award-winning international business specialising in silk painting and batik, bold and colourful paintings, cards, prints and silk scarves. She wrote a recipe book about her recovery from anorexia and speaks about her journey to schools, businesses and at festivals.

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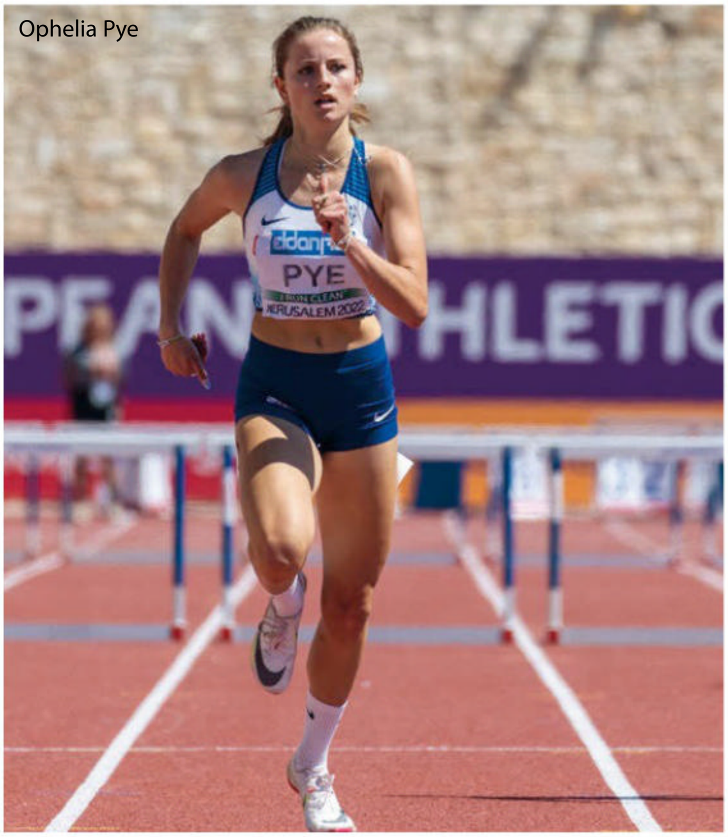
Young Sports Personality of the Year


Ophelia Pye

Christopher Skelley MBE

(Joint) Winner Ophelia Pye *Devizes*

Ophelia, known to friends as Phe Phe, has had a phenomenal year. The Marlborough Athletics and Dauntsey's School pupil 400m hurdler qualified for the U18 European championships in Jerusalem at the beginning of July and unexpectedly made the final, which she won in not only a championship record time but also a British Under 18 national record as well. From there she went to the U20 World championships in Cali, Colombia, where she defied expectations to make the semi-final, just missing a final berth. But she was called into the relay team and helped them win bronze. Her meteoric rise has helped win her a place at Harvard Law School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is one to watch in the very near future.

(Joint) Winner Christopher Skelley *Wroughton*

It has been an exceptional last two years for Chris. Aside from marrying his fiancée Louise, he was awarded an MBE in recognition of winning a judo gold medal at the Paralympic Games in Tokyo. Despite the disadvantage of having his weight category discontinued, Chris continues to represent his country with aplomb despite some opponents weighing nearly twice as much as him. The disadvantage hasn't stopped him from winning medals, which is no surprise given a determination that has seen him overcome his blindness to reach world number one. He also devotes time to training and mentoring younger athletes, as well as promoting paralympic sport with panache and good humour. His next goal is to become double Paralympic gold medallist in Paris 2024.

Third place Cameron Jacobs *Salisbury*

Cameron has Asperger's Syndrome, Tourette's Syndrome, ADHD, dyspraxia, sensory processing disorder and growth hormone deficiency but that hasn't prevented him from competing at long distance trail running, frequently barefoot. He was given a scholarship to The True Athlete Project (TAP) where he has been mentored by Paralympic judo gold medallist Chris Skelley. Determined to give back, he raised £3,000 for TAP by running 70km along the trails of the Great Stones Way on one of the hottest days of the year.

> **"She won in not only a championship record time but also a British Under 18 national record"**

> **"He was awarded an MBE in recognition of winning a judo gold at the Paralympic Games in Tokyo"**

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Independent Retailer of the Year, *incorporating Farm/Village shop*

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CHALKE VALLEY
STORES

Winner Chalke Valley Community Stores *Broad Chalke*

Started by a committee of Broad Chalke villagers in 2013, the award-winning stores has become a vital hub for the whole of the valley. The shop and coffee shop attract customers from across the area, particularly in the summer months. It also has a sub branch of the Tisbury Post Office three mornings a week. The Hub, which has four part-time staff and manager Tony Patel, came into its own in the pandemic when a team of volunteers delivered food. They have continued to offer this local delivery service to those who are less able and find it difficult to get to the Hub. When flour ran short it worked with a farmer to have his wheat milled and supplied direct. Aside from fresh local produce, artisan cheeses, beers and a myriad of other goodies, Tony has organised visiting jazz bands, a coffee shop meet-up and birthday teas. The Chalke Valley is famous for its history festival and staff and volunteers from the Hub help to supply the campers and re-enactors with freshly cooked bacon butties and other snack foods and hot drinks.

> “The award winning stores has become a vital hub for the whole valley”

Second place The Cake Tin *Malmesbury*

Victoria Parry’s Malmesbury cake shop opened in 2019 after she was made redundant from Lloyd’s Bank. Within four months the pandemic closed the shop and Victoria had to find a way to carry on trading. She developed a reduced range that she could make and deliver on her own and enhanced the website so people could order online. She also launched her ‘random act of cakeyness’ which saw customers nominate their friends and family for heart-warming free cake. She also bakes free birthday cakes for Ukranian children living locally.

Third place Mays Greengrocers *Corsham*

Mays is a small independent family-run fruit and vegetable shop owned by Mitchell May. He prides himself on the shop’s good customer service and friendly staff. He and his team make as point of chatting and having a laugh with customers and making sure they have everything they need. It provides fresh fruit and vegetables that are as local as possible as well as local flowers, honey, yogurt, eggs and rapeseed oil. Throughout the lockdown it adapted and provided a delivery service.

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[COM-MUN-ITY] noun

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For us that community is not just made up of teachers and pupils, but parents and Old Verlucians too. Our community is also made up of everyone who lives and works in the School and includes, chefs, domestic assistants, ground staff, maintenance, administrative staff, matrons, the School nurse and many, many more. It is those colleagues who don’t set foot in classrooms or on sports fields, who make the School what it is. Community is so important to Warminster, it helps our children to grow, flourish and feel a part of something bigger than themselves.

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Local Hero of the Year

WINTERBOURNE
GLEBE HALL

Winner Maureen Atkinson *Winterbourne Gunner*

Maureen, known to all as Mo, is the dependable centre of life in the Winterbournes near Salisbury and if anyone wants to know anything, she is the lady to call. It doesn't matter if it's a new government policy, an historical topic or how to pay your Council Tax online, Mo will know. Among the many roles she occupies are chairman and co-ordinator of the Bourne Valley Link Scheme, a stalwart of Bourne Valley Day Centre for the Elderly, vice chair of Winterbourne parish council, secretary of the Bourne Valley Historical Society and a mainstay of the gardening club. There's barely any fundraising, grant application or event that she doesn't have a hand in. Says one friend: "Her days are always filled with helping, organising, assisting, and enabling people to achieve all sorts of things from fixing a boiler, getting a vaccine, hospital appointments, mental health issues and telephoning people, thus saving them from loneliness and isolation. She is truly our local hero. Our world, and the world of many is better because she is in it."

Second place Jane Ebel *Salisbury*

Jane has been instrumental in Salisbury's response to the invasion of Ukraine. Her experiences of eastern Europe mean she was a font of knowledge for potential hosts trying to navigate the Homes for Ukraine scheme. She established the Salisbury Community Hub for Ukraine at Salisbury Methodist church and made it a place where refugees and their hosts can go for information and support. Says a friend: "She throws herself keenly into dealing with any problem and doesn't turn anyone away."

Third place Jack Jones *Warminster*

Jack has run the six a side football league in west Wiltshire for more than five years and has taken it from strength to strength. Starting with 14 teams he has grown it over 50, which sees nearly 500 people a week enjoying the sport they love. He is an active member of Sustainable Warminster and does regular litter picks. He also volunteers at The Atheneum theatre behind the bar as well as behind the scenes building and painting the staging and sets.

> **"She is truly our local hero. Our world, and the world of many is better because she is in it"**

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Apprentice of the Year

Winner Jacob Greenfield *Warminster*

Thatching apprentice Jacob was awarded a QEST Horlock Educational Trust Apprenticeship from the Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust in 2022 to support his training with Ellis Butcher of ThatchCraft Ltd. Ellis says: “He has a real passion for thatching and is committed to learning and improving his craft. During the 12 months he has been with Thatchcraft Ltd, he has relocated to be nearer to his work, showing a commitment to me and his apprenticeship. His work and knowledge improves on a daily basis and he continuously strives to improve his work - he is a perfectionist at heart and takes great pride in his work. He often stays on at the end of the day in order to finish off the section he is working on. He is becoming more confident in the decisions he makes on the roof. I now allow him to cut out the ornate patterns on the ridges, something I am very particular about, and he has taken on more responsibility, which has been a great help to me. He is a great asset to the company and we see him as the future.”

Second place Alana Long *Dinton*

Nursery Educator apprentice Alana began at First Friends Day Nursery, Barford St. Martin two years ago and started her Level 3 apprenticeship to become a fully qualified practitioner. Her employer says: “Alana has demonstrated her caring and compassionate nature, going above and beyond to enhance and extend the children’s interests and their learning. Although young, she has a large and loving family where she is used to being involved with young children and she has brought this experience with her into her everyday role.”

Third place Michaela Kalupa *Swindon*

Michaela is studying for a Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development Level 3 apprenticeship at Good Energy in Chippenham. Line manager Laura Yerburgh says: “Michaela has played a key role in improving the employee ‘onboarding’ experience when they first join and using digital content to support learning. She’s improved accessibility and made our intranet pages much more engaging and straightforward, as well as recording short demonstrations and ‘how-to’ guides. It’s been fantastic to see her make such a positive impact.”

> **“He has a real passion for thatching and is committed to learning and improving his craft”**

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The Arts, Culture & Music Award

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ARTIST STUDIOS
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Winner Fisherton Mill *Salisbury*

Fisherton Mill is an award-winning Art Gallery in Salisbury housed within a converted Victorian grain mill. It has been privately owned and run by the Fox family for more than 25 years and receives no arts funding to support its projects. It has become a staple of the arts scene in Salisbury, a platform for artists and makers to showcase their work and a place for people to visit and absorb themselves in the creative atmosphere. It runs regular exhibitions in the main gallery which provide an opportunity for artists to display and sell their work. These exhibitions are always free to visit and open to everyone of all ages so that they can encourage the local community and visitors from further afield to come and enjoy the work on show and learn about the artists involved. The Gallery Shop on the ground floor is filled with handmade arts and crafts and the studio spaces include a book binder, silversmith, calligrapher, textile artists, painters, printmakers, a picture framer and graphic designers. It is a unique and beautiful place to escape and immerse yourself in the imaginations of artists and makers.

(Joint) Second place Revolution Performing Arts *Swindon*

Revolution Performing Arts began in 2007 with four children, with a mission to provide affordable access to performing arts to all young people. Now it works with around 1,000 young people every year from all backgrounds across North Wiltshire. It strives to provide a fun environment for young people, to build their confidence, boost their self-esteem and develop their individual artistic potential. It produces five public shows a year featuring 120 performers per show playing to 200 to 600 audience members across the community.

(Joint) Second place BL Sculptures *Cricklade*

Ben Lee is an artistic metal sculptor based in Cricklade who often incorporates recycled materials, mainly horse shoes, to create lifelike animal sculptures, ranging from small hedgehogs to huge life size horses. He discovered his passion when he asked a farrier if he had any spare horseshoes to experiment with and from there developed his skill. He is most proud of the sculpture based on his favourite race horse Altior, jumping over a national hunt fence, which resides at the world famous Cheltenham Racecourse.

> **"It is a unique and beautiful place to escape and immerse yourself in the imaginations of artists and makers"**

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Lifetime Achievement Award

Winner David Rowlands *Swindon*

Having left a senior role at Zurich in 2001, David looked for an organisation that was to many the least popular to get involved with. So, in 2002, he began volunteering with The Harbour Project in Swindon. It is the only organisation in Wiltshire providing direct support to asylum seekers and refugees. Two years later he joined their board of trustees, becoming chair in 2005.

David visits the centre two or three times a week and just quietly tunes in and listens. He has a reputation for taking on some of the more difficult cases and uses his experience gained through volunteering at Citizens Advice Swindon for more than 20 years to find solutions.

He is passionate about The Harbour and is not afraid to say what he thinks about how refugees are treated or the attitudes of politicians and of those in charge.

From a small volunteer led organisation in 2002, David has been the driving force behind its establishment as a registered charity in 2003, conversion to CIO in 2017, and receiving Queens Award for Voluntary Service in 2020.

During this time, The Harbour has also grown to around 1,500 guests with 11 paid members of staff and a volunteer force of more than 80 with the charity winning the Pride of Swindon Award in 2017 and the High Sheriff's Award in 2019.

He also served as a governor at Swindon New College for around 10 years, more latterly as chair.

> **"David has been the driving force behind its establishment as a registered charity"**

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Pride of Wiltshire Award

Winner Youth Adventure Trust *Swindon*

The Youth Adventure Trust is celebrating its 30th anniversary. Over the past three decades, they have supported and transformed the lives of thousands of young people across the county.

When the judges read their nomination, it was a unanimous decision, they wanted to recognise all they do for young people with the Pride of Wiltshire award.

It is the words of young people like 14-year-old Bradley who sum up the importance of their work: “Without you I would have lost my shine. When I started the programme I wasn’t in the best place mentally. Yet going away and having the experiences I had really put the light back into my life. It made me realise that bad days are just that, bad days, and without them, good days wouldn’t be as good.”

At the heart of Youth Adventure Trust is the belief that everybody should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. With a combination of one-to-one support and outdoor adventure they help some of the most vulnerable 11–15-year-olds from Wiltshire and Swindon to unlock their potential and lead positive lives in the future. Their programme, which spans three school years, is a genuinely life changing opportunity, giving young people the chance to build resilience, develop confidence and learn skills that will last a lifetime.

They help up to 360 young people a year develop these key skills through the challenge of outdoor adventure.

The hurdles these young people face in their everyday lives can often seem overwhelming, but the Youth Adventure Trust gives them a real chance to change, helping them to believe they can have an influence on their own future.

Over the past 30 years they have helped almost 2,000 young people, delivered more than 11,114 hours of outdoor activities and facilitated 428,000 hours of activity participation - the equivalent of 39 hours a day every day for 30 years.

There are no financial barriers to taking part as their programme is entirely free of charge to all the young people, their families and the organisations who nominate them to take part.

At the Youth Adventure Trust, they believe that getting outdoors is more important than ever before - it improves wellbeing, promotes positive mental health, builds resilience and counterbalances the long term effects of living through and coping with such challenging times. The young people in our county deserve to have these opportunities.

> **“It made me realise bad days are just that, bad days, and without them good days wouldn’t be as good”**

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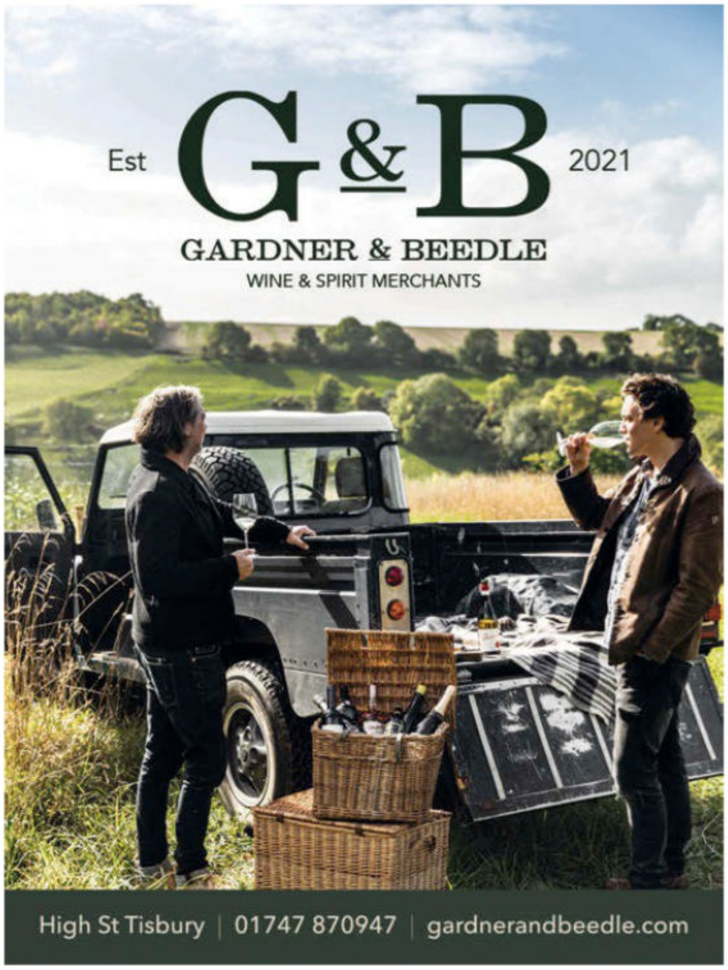

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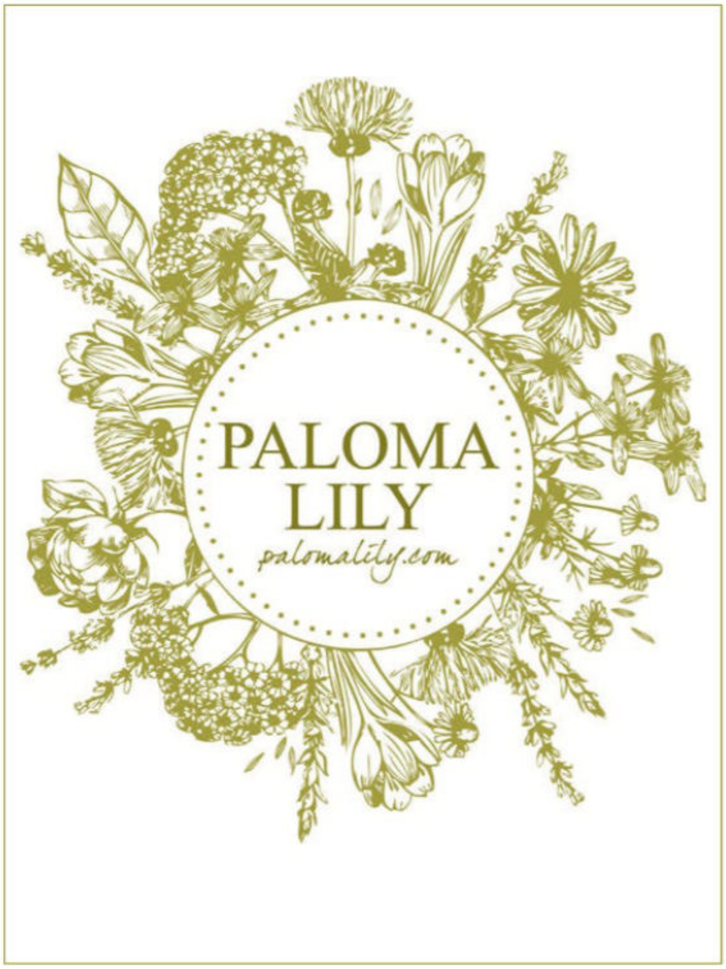

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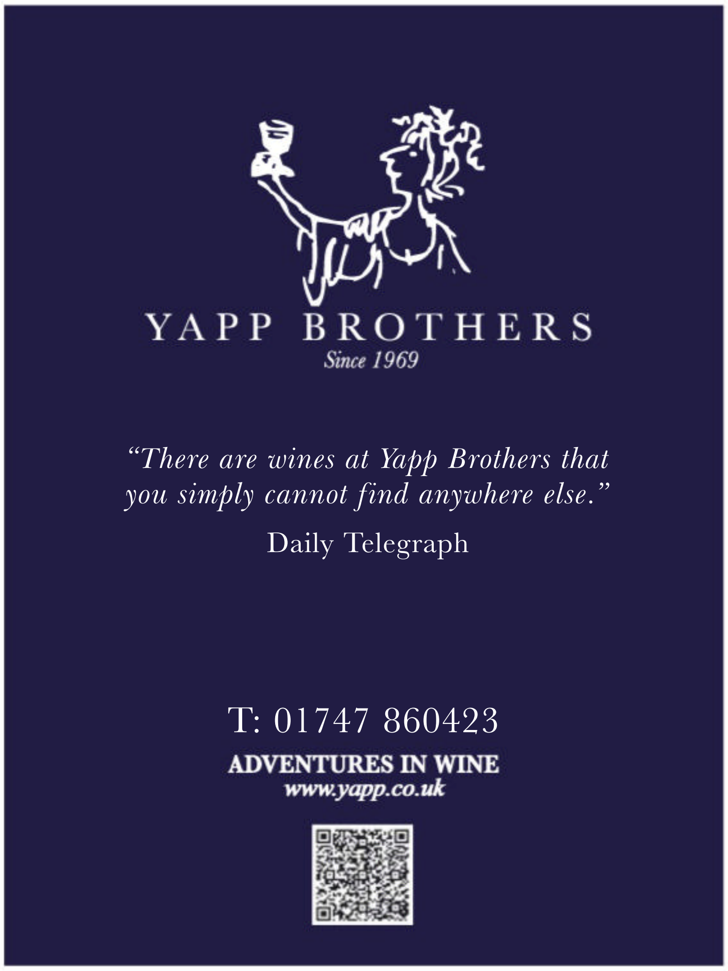

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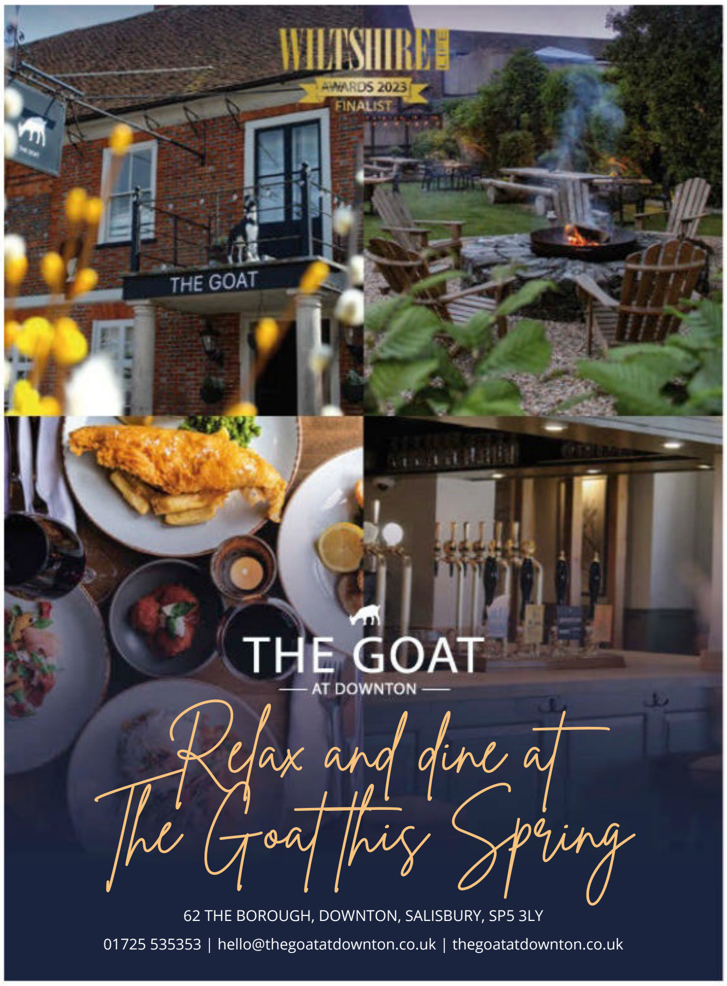
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Photos from the Ceremony

Community Group of the Year

Third place: Harnham Community Network
Sponsored by Wiltshire Community Foundation

Community Group of the Year

Joint Winner: The Platform Project CIC
Sponsored by Wiltshire Community Foundation

Community Group of the Year

Joint Winner: Wiltshire & Swindon Credit Union
Sponsored by Wiltshire Community Foundation

Teacher/Coach of the Year

Third place: *Jessica Hills on behalf of* **Shelley Hills**
Sponsored by Wansbroughs Solicitors

Teacher/Coach of the Year

Second place: Liam Abram Smith
Sponsored by Wansbroughs Solicitors

Teacher/Coach of the Year

First place: Caroline Radcliffe
Sponsored by Wansbroughs Solicitors

Business of the Year

Third place: Milk & Tweed
Sponsored by Hawksmoor Investment Management

Business of the Year

Second place: Blue Bee
Sponsored by Hawksmoor Investment Management

Business of the Year

First place: *Paul Geoghegan on behalf of* **Perfect Pet Insurance.**
Sponsored by Hawksmoor Investment Management

Independent Food/Drink Producer of the Year

Third place: Downton Distillery
Sponsored by The Heritage Fine Food Company Ltd

Independent Food/Drink Producer of the Year

Second place: BRAVE Chutney
Sponsored by The Heritage Fine Food Company Ltd

Independent Food/Drink Producer of the Year

First place: Hollychocs
Sponsored by The Heritage Fine Food Company Ltd

Third Place

Conservation Project of the Year

Third place: Salisbury Cathedral's East Gable Pinnacles
Sponsored by Ramsbury Estate

Conservation Project of the Year

Second place: The Dinton Daffodil Project
Sponsored by Ramsbury Estate

Conservation Project of the Year

First place: Wiltshire Wildlife Trust – Taking Action For Insects. Sponsored by Ramsbury Estate

Third Place

Charity of the Year

Third place: Doing it for Dan
Sponsored by Gel Studios

Second Place
Ipsum

Charity of the Year

Second place: Ipsum
Sponsored by Gel Studios

Charity of the Year

First place: *Fiona Oliver on behalf of* **Willows Counselling and Training. Sponsored by Gel Studios**

Pub of the Year

Third place: The Goat at Downton
Sponsored by The Pensord Group

Pub of the Year

Second place: The Three Brewers
Sponsored by The Pensord Group

Pub of the Year

First place: The Winchester Gate
Sponsored by The Pensord Group

The Green Business Award

Third place: Good Energy
Sponsored by Grist Environmental

The Green Business Award

Second place: Coombe Bissett Blooms
Sponsored by Grist Environmental

The Green Business Award

First place: Downton Distillery
Sponsored by Grist Environmental

Photos from the Ceremony

Young Entrepreneur of the Year

Third place: Nicola Davis
Sponsored by Evelyn Partners

Young Entrepreneur of the Year

Second place: Aimee Hancock
Sponsored by Evelyn Partners

Young Entrepreneur of the Year

First place: Ethan Davids
Sponsored by Evelyn Partners

Young Sports Personality of the Year

Third place: Cameron Jacobs
Sponsored by Charlton Baker

Young Sports Personality of the Year

Joint Winner: Ophelia Pye
Sponsored by Charlton Baker

Young Sports Personality of the Year

Joint Winner: *Louise Hunt Skelley on behalf of* **Christopher Skelley MBE. Sponsored by Charlton Baker**

Independent Retailer of the Year

Third place: Mays Greengrocers
Sponsored by Black Nova Designs

Independent Retailer of the Year

Second place: The Cake Tin
Sponsored by Black Nova Designs

Independent Retailer of the Year

First place: Chalke Valley Community Stores
Sponsored by Black Nova Designs

Local Hero of the Year

Third place: Jack Jones
Sponsored by Warminster School

Local Hero of the Year

Second place: Jane Ebel
Sponsored by Warminster School

Local Hero of the Year

First place: Maureen Atkinson
Sponsored by Warminster School

Apprentice of the Year

Third place: Michaela Kalupa
Sponsored by Denmaur

Apprentice of the Year

Second place: Alana Long
Sponsored by Denmaur

Apprentice of the Year

First place: Jacob Greenfield
Sponsored by Denmaur

The Arts, Culture & Music Award

Joint Second place: BL Sculptures
Sponsored by Dauntsey's

The Arts, Culture & Music Award

Joint Second place: Revolution Performing Arts
Sponsored by Dauntsey's

The Arts, Culture & Music Award

Winner: Fisherton Mill
Sponsored by Dauntsey's

Lifetime Achievement Award

David Rowlands
Sponsored by Evelyn Partners

Pride of Wiltshire Award

Youth Adventure Trust
Sponsored by Trethowans Solicitors

Serves 8

KING CHARLES III
CORONATION • 6TH MAY 2023

Pudding fit for a King

Illustrative purposes only

There are recipes created to celebrate The King's Coronation. This simply delicious pudding is one of them – it is sure to be gone in a trifle...

Adam Handling's Strawberry and Ginger Trifle

IF YOU are planning a get together on Coronation Day this is the official dessert created by Michelin star chef and restaurateur Adam Handling for the historic event.

Ingredients

For the Yorkshire parkin

- 150g golden syrup
- 150g unsalted butter 40g black treacle
- 150g soft brown sugar 150g self-raising flour 115g oats
- 2 whole eggs
- 8g ginger, ground
- 1.5 tsp nutmeg, ground 1.5 tsp mixed spice

For the strawberry jelly

- 350g frozen strawberries, defrosted and blended
- 125g caster sugar
- 6 gelatine leaves

For the ginger custard

- 8 egg yolks
- 130g caster sugar
- 100g plain flour
- 500ml whole milk
- 1tsp ginger, ground

For the cream

- 300g double cream, cold 50g icing sugar
- 1 vanilla pod, scraped bag

To serve

- 150g frozen strawberries, defrosted and chopped
- Nuts, chopped

For the Yorkshire parkin:

Melt the butter, syrups and brown sugar in a saucepan. Place all the dry ingredients into a mixer, on a low speed, and combine them. Add the wet ingredients and mix until incorporated. Finish with the eggs and beat for 5 minutes, until smooth and pale. Bake in a lined 900g loaf tin, at 160°C, for 25 minutes

For the strawberry jelly:

Soften the gelatine in a bowl of cold water and squeeze to remove all the water. Warm the blended strawberries in a saucepan with the sugar and the gelatine. Pour through a fine-mesh sieve or coffee filter, to make the liquid become clear.

For the ginger custard:

Place the milk and ginger into a saucepan and heat until just before it reaches the boil. Whisk the egg yolks and the sugar together, add the flour and then add the milk. Pour into a saucepan, cook on a low heat and whisk for 5 minutes until the custard thickens. Chill down in a tray and cover with greaseproof paper, to cool.

For the cream:

Add the icing sugar and vanilla seeds to the cream. Whip the cream to stiff peaks, then transfer to a piping bag for serving.

To serve:

Dice the Parkin into chunks and add it to the bottom of the glass. Place a few of the defrosted strawberries on top. Pour the strawberry jelly into the glass, over the defrosted strawberries and diced Parkin, and transfer to the fridge, to set. Spoon a layer of ginger custard onto the top of the jelly. Pipe dots of the cream on top, until the whole glass is covered. Garnish with the chopped nuts.

- *www.coronation.gov.uk*

Go with the flow

This month, Grant Berry from Yapp Brothers wine merchants focuses on the wine varieties of the Loire Valley, and says there is something for every taste along this historic river's route.

FRANCE'S LONGEST river valley - the Loire - runs some 600 miles (1,000km) from its source in the Massif Central to its estuary on the Atlantic coast. Connecting seemingly disparate wine regions, it has been the playground of the rich and famous for centuries.

Royalty and nobles built many hundreds of châteaux along its banks in varying architectural styles and sizes, but wine preceded their arrival and has out-lived the monarchy. Much like the châteaux, the wines are similarly varied. Now France's fourth largest vineyard area, many wines are single-varietal, which makes for easy comparisons across the myriad appellations, once you've worked out which grapes you enjoy.

For Sauvignon Blanc seekers, look to vibrant gooseberry-scented wines from the far east of the valley in Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé – although the satellite *appellations* of Quincy, Reuilly and Menetou-Salon offer similar, more affordable options (Yapp Brothers £15.90-£19.95). Touraine Sauvignon tends to be even better value – Domaine Beauséjour's 'Silex' bottling has the aromas of a cow parsley-bedecked bank after an April shower (Tanners.co.uk, £11.95).

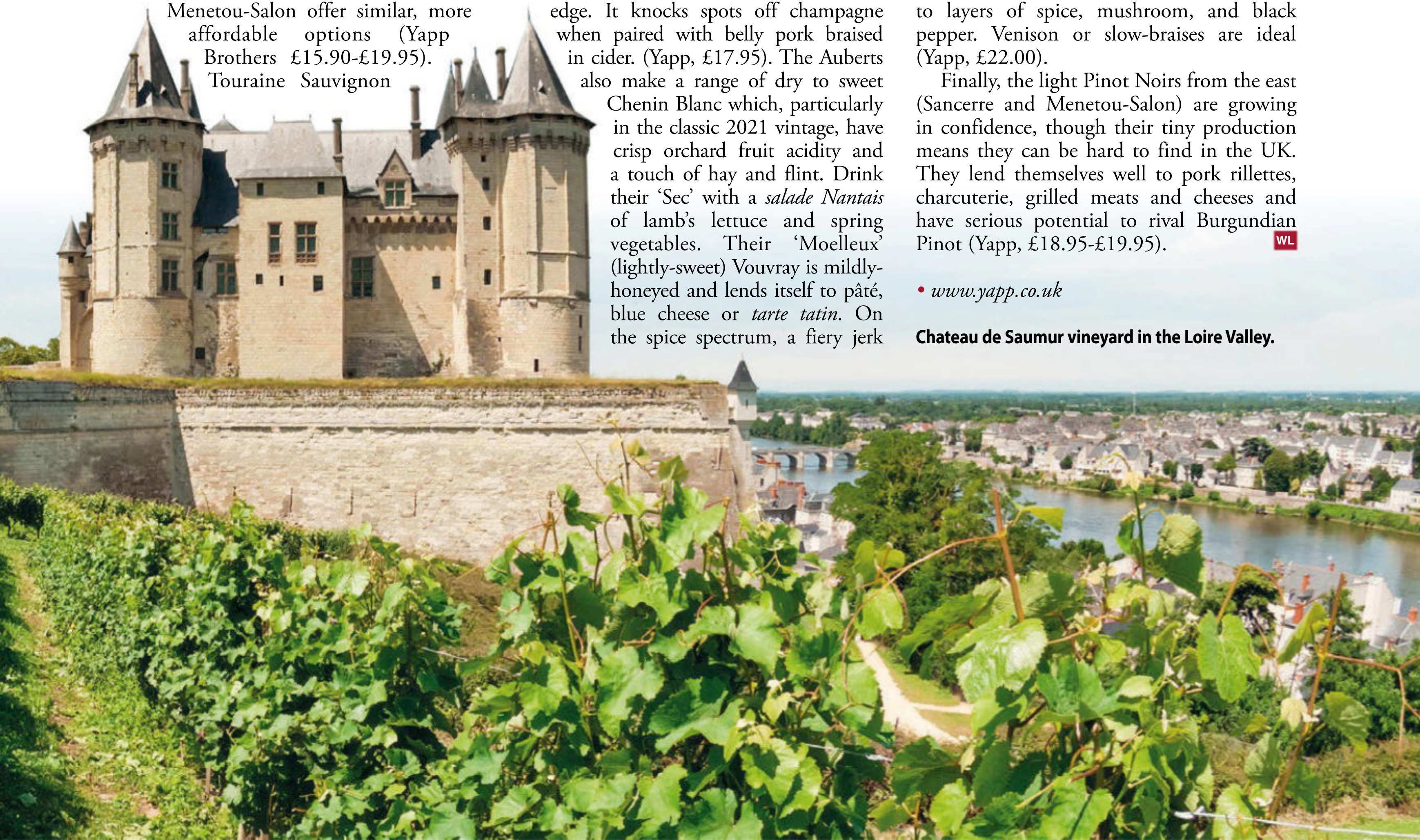
If looking for value amongst whites, good Muscadet is a bargain, though select carefully – know your producer. A peerless companion to oysters and shellfish, look out for *sur lie* bottlings which are overwintered on their lees to impart more body and flavour. Jean-François Baron's has an impeccable whistle-clean finish and is just the ticket with fish and chips (Yapp, £12.95).

The whites and sparkling wines of Saumur and Vouvray from Chenin Blanc act as great aperitifs. Often the Reserve bottlings of fizz offer a little more honeyed richness to offset Chenin's vibrant acidity. Located up the Coquette valley from Vouvray, the Aubert family are celebrating their 200th Anniversary at the helm of the family domaine and their sparkling Brut is baked apples and honeyed apricots in abundance amidst a *vif* citrus edge. It knocks spots off champagne when paired with belly pork braised in cider. (Yapp, £17.95). The Auberts also make a range of dry to sweet Chenin Blanc which, particularly in the classic 2021 vintage, have crisp orchard fruit acidity and a touch of hay and flint. Drink their 'Sec' with a *salade Nantais* of lamb's lettuce and spring vegetables. Their 'Moelleux' (lightly-sweet) Vouvray is mildly-honeyed and lends itself to pâté, blue cheese or *tarte tatin*. On the spice spectrum, a fiery jerk chicken or a prawn laksa would be apposite (Yapp Brothers, £15.25, £17.25).

The reds from mainly Cabernet Franc in the west (Chinon and Saumur) are ideal brasserie wines, though some *cuvées* have the legs to age. The former are meant to be drunk on their youthful berry fruit with *steak frites* ideally. Look out for those with alcohol levels around 12.5-13 per cent abv. Emilien Desbourdes' Chinon 'L'Arpenty' is a classic of the genre with a vibrant raspberry & cherry core, fresh acidity and enough tannin to tease (Yapp, £15.95). Domaine de la Noblaie's bright-fruited 'Temps des Cerises' is a long-term cherry-blossomed favourite that I couldn't leave out (Wine Society, £12.50). Those intended for cellaring can often be a little weightier. Wine expert Matthew Jukes has called Domaine Filliatreau's Vieilles Vignes bottling "a mesmerising and peerless glimpse of what Loire Cabernet Franc is capable of." Best decanted for an hour or two, its plum and black cherry centre leads to layers of spice, mushroom, and black pepper. Venison or slow-braises are ideal (Yapp, £22.00).

Finally, the light Pinot Noirs from the east (Sancerre and Menetou-Salon) are growing in confidence, though their tiny production means they can be hard to find in the UK. They lend themselves well to pork rillettes, charcuterie, grilled meats and cheeses and have serious potential to rival Burgundian Pinot (Yapp, £18.95-£19.95).

- *www.yapp.co.uk*



Chateau de Saumur vineyard in the Loire Valley.

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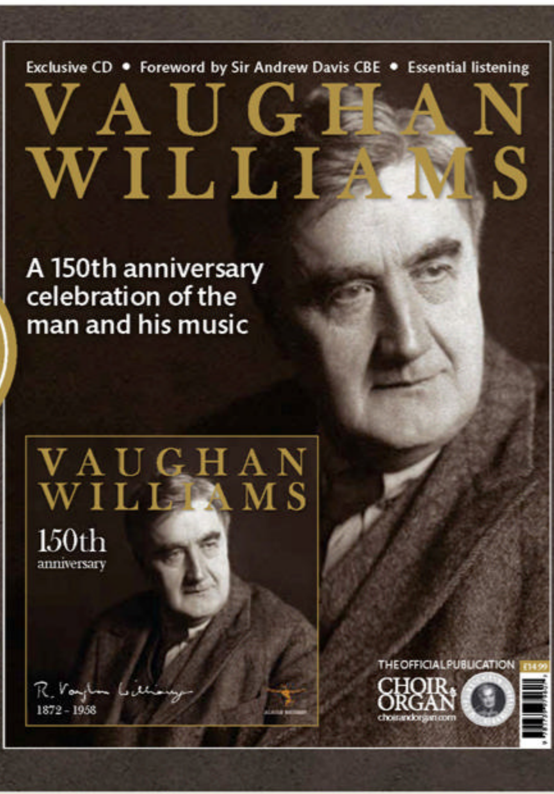

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Soil or dirt? It's up to you

Garden designer and beekeeper Sophie Butcher shows how a fungus can improve your plants… and sequester carbon while it does so.

HEALTHY SOIL has a rich dark colour, a wonderful earthy smell, holds and percolates water efficiently, and forms a habitat for billions of living organisms. One teaspoon of soil holds more micro-organisms than there are people on earth. Dirt (clay, sand, silt), in contrast, is lighter in colour, has little living in it, allows water to run off and doesn't have that earthy smell. It doesn't grow much either.

Being a key part of the carbon cycle, soil is a major reservoir for carbon and its potential to store this is unlimited.

400 million years ago the earth was barren. When plants came onto land from the sea they teamed up with mycorrhizal fungi and beneficial bacteria, and began the process of making our soil. Mycorrhizal fungi play a huge role in this. In the process, they sequester millions of tons of carbon in the soil every year and help with root capacity.

Unlike decomposer fungi, mycorrhizal fungi acquire their energy as liquid sugars directly from their plant hosts. The relationship is symbiotic. The mycorrhizal fungi's hyphae (hair-like filaments) attach to plant roots and extend the plant's reach far beyond the plant itself. These extract vital minerals from dissolved rock surfaces and make them available to their host plants, along with water that may have been out of reach of the plant's roots, making plants more resilient to drought.

These hyphae are coated in a protective sheath called glomalin, discovered in 1996 by Sara Wright. Glomalin gives soil its 'tilth': its sticky, crumbly texture, its dark brown colour, its wonderful earthy scent.

Every time you crumble a handful of healthy soil in your hands it looks like a bunch of peas, called aggregates – these are 'stuck' together by glomalin. Aggregates are stable enough to resist wind and water erosion, and porous enough to let air, water and roots move through them. They also harbour more beneficial microbes, hold more water, and help the soil surface resist crusting (causing run-off when it rains) better than dirt alone.

In addition, these mycorrhizal fungi connect individual plants below ground and facilitate the transfer of nutrients between species. This is one reason why above-ground diversity is important.

The unsung heroes of soil carbon storage, mycorrhizal fungi take that carbon fixed into sugars during photosynthesis and pumped into the soil via the roots, and lock it away in the glomalin sheath around their hyphae.

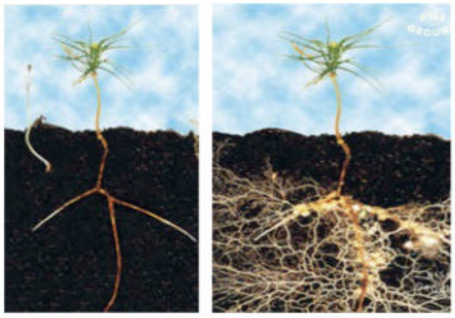
In healthy soil, this results in carbon sequestration at the rate of 5-20 tonnes per hectare per year. Every 27 tonnes of carbon sequestered biologically in soil represents 100 tonnes of carbon dioxide removed from the atmosphere. While reducing emissions is vital, so is locking carbon back into our soil where it belongs.

Every time you dig, rotovate or plough, you upset these delicate relationships, and everything has to start over. Instead of digging weeds up, hoe them or mulch them with compost to prevent light reaching them. They will die back naturally (without any need for poisons), then other organisms will consume them and release the minerals back into the soil for take up by other plants.

Boost the mycorrhizal fungi by planting every bare patch with wildflowers. If you plant annuals, they will die back at the autumn and add to the humus in your soil, feeding the millions of organisms there and boosting the soil's water-holding ability still more.

Working together

A mycorrhiza is a symbiotic association between a green plant and a fungus found in the roots of most plants. In a typical garden anywhere in the world, plants pump 30-40% of the carbon-based sugars they make during photosynthesis directly to the fungi via their roots; in return, the fungi supply the plants with water and mineral nutrients via their threadlike roots (hyphae), again direct to the plant's roots. Plant growth is far better in the presence of mycorrhizal fungi than in their absence.



A schematic of a plant with and without mycorrhizal fungi support. Courtesy of kisstheground.com

Stuff to do in May

- Put the lawn mower away for No Mow May. Find out how to make the most of your lawn with tips from Plantlife. https://nomowmay.plantlife.org.uk/
- Plant trees and wildflower meadows in your neighbourhood. There are loads of charities, such as the Wiltshire & Berkshire Canal Trust and Avon Needs Trees, where you can get involved in improving your local landscape.
- Some plants benefit from a Chelsea Chop (to coincide with the end of the Chelsea Flower Show). This stimulates the growth of side shoots and extends the flowering period of later-flowering herbaceous perennials. It involves pruning back, say, one third of stems by a half, and on the other side of the plant, one third of stems by two thirds, giving you three phases of flowering. Plants that benefit from the Chop include phlox, achillea, campanula, aster, echinacea, rudbeckia, sedum, penstemons, helenium, nepeta, loosestrife (Lysimachia). Watch Monty Don demonstrate here: www.gardenersworld.com/plants/how-to-do-the-chelsea-chop

Dates to remember

Celebrate World Earth Day and World Bee Day (April 22 & May 20) with Bees Abroad.

Bees play an important role in caring for and protecting our environment and support transformational projects across Africa. Follow the story, from elephants and bees in a Ugandan village, to crop pollination for Bee Farmers on Crutches in Sierra Leone, to protected forested areas across Africa where bees are saving trees. Celebrate the value of honey, generating income and improving livelihoods for beekeepers.

- *Get involved to support beekeeping projects that will improve livelihoods for economically and environmentally disadvantaged communities across Africa. www.beesabroad.org.uk/greenstory*

Farmers too are discovering the benefits of conservation agriculture, of growing crops without ploughing, of using cover crops to protect bare earth, and of crop rotation to reduce weeds and pests. www.soilfirstfarming.co.uk/no-till/

Look after the bees

With World Bee Day on 20 May, how will you celebrate? Dave Goulson is author of *Gardening for Bumblebees* and *Silent Earth: Averting the Insect Apocalypse.* (I have listened to him read the latter on an audio book and loved it. Includes lots of things you can do to make a difference.) He offers these quick tips to make your garden more bee friendly.

He says: 'We have about 270 species of wild bee in the UK, including bumblebees, cuckoo bees, mason bees, mining bees, leaf-cutter bees and many more besides. It is easy to attract dozens of species to live in your garden. First, grow some bee-friendly flowers, including wildflowers – as many as possible: marjoram, betony, viper's bugloss, foxglove, field scabious, comfrey and thyme are all beautiful natives that are much loved by bees and other pollinators.

'Grow a mix to cater for the different types of bee. For example, lungwort is great for attracting hairy-footed flower bees, and lamb's ear is loved by wool carder bees.

You could also buy or make a bee hotel (advice can be found online) to provide somewhere for them to breed. With a bit of luck, in spring you'll get red mason bees filling the holes with their offspring, and maybe also leafcutter bees later in the summer – they are fascinating to watch.

'One more thing – no pesticides, please!

- *Sophie Butcher is the beekeeping garden designer based in Chippenham. www.hithergardendesigns.co.uk*

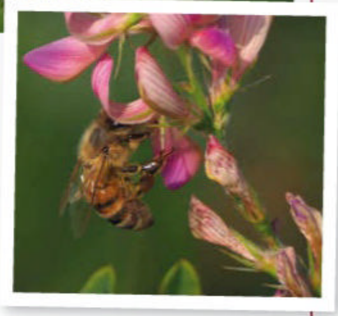
Beneficial flowers for the garden

Phacelia has quick-growing, weed-suppressing foliage. Its lavender-blue flowers are brilliant for pollinators. It grows in almost any soil and breaks down rapidly after mulching to help build your soil. Rake some seeds into a sunny patch of soil and water until they are established.

Right: Phacelia - perfect for wildflower meadows or a naturalised planting scheme.

PHOTOS: RICHARD RICKITT / SOPHIE BUTCHER

Sainfoin was largely grown in England during the 17th -19th centuries in hay fields. It is frost hardy and drought tolerant. A nitrogen fixer and loved by pollinators, if you leave if for 3-4 years, its deep roots reduce soil compaction. Seeds available from www.wildflowersuk.com



Right: Sainfoin, with lovely pink spires, flourishes in poor soils.

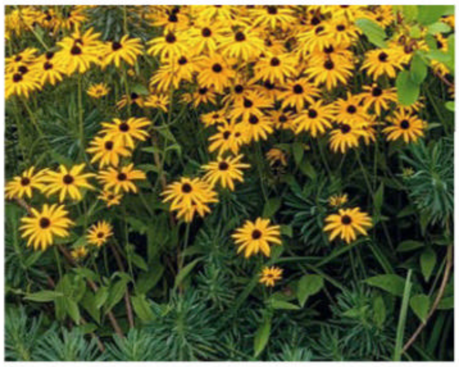
Plants for poor soil

Poor soil is low in nutrients, whether due to lack of organic matter or mineral deficiencies. Some plants still do fairly well in these conditions.

Asters, for example A. amellus 'King George', are a perennial that die back to the ground each year. In late summer they produce a mass of mauve flowers about 50cm high. Great for pollinators. They look good with grasses and achilleas.

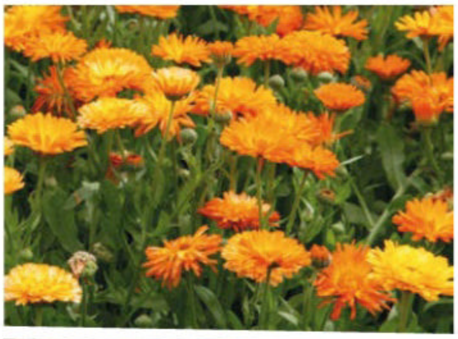
Left: Asters like full sun and can cope with partial shade.

Another perennial that has been around for eons is **Black-Eyed Susan** (Rudbeckia fulgida). Plant it in drifts in a sunny spot where it doesn't completely dry out.



Right: Black-Eyed Susan likes full sun and flowers for ages.

Marigolds (Calendula officinalis) are often grown as companion plants in the vegetable garden. The petals are edible and have a peppery flavour – pretty in a salad. As annuals, mine self-seed happily every year. In particular, I grow them in full sun in the verge outside my house where the soil is pretty dreadful, and they flower from June to October.



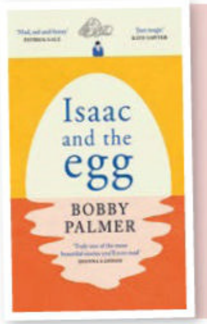
Right: Marigolds are ideal for filling gaps in a border and last well in a vase. Available to order from crocus.co.uk

Lavender thrives on poor but well drained soil and, being a Mediterranean plant, can cope during prolonged dry periods. Fantastic along paths where the scent fills the air as you brush past it.

Right: Lavender produces spikes of aromatic flowers that will bob with pollinators all day.

Settle down with a good book

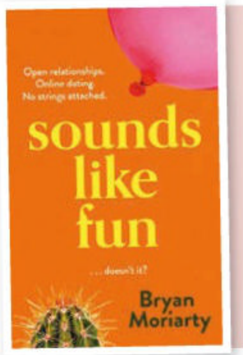
Bert's Books is an independent book store, both online and in the heart of Swindon's Old Town, here are a few of their favourite books to enjoy reading through the month of May and beyond.



Isaac and the Egg by Bobby Palmer

Isaac walks into the woods one night and screams into the wilderness – he isn't prepared for the egg to scream back. He takes it home and they form an unlikely friendship. This is in equal parts a heart-breaking and heart-warming exploration of grief – don't ask questions, just read it.

ISBN: 9781472285515



Sounds Like Fun by Bryan Moriarty

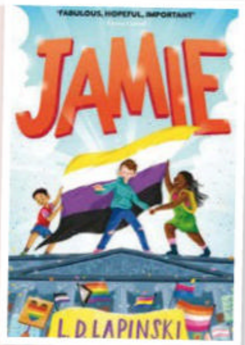
When Eoin's boyfriend of seven years suggests an open relationship, Eoin is forced to confront everything in his life – from the truth about his relationship with Rich to the mystery of his missing boss from the café. A modern romantic comedy that is as fun as it sounds!

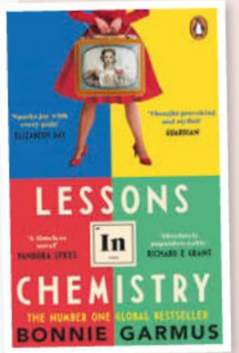
ISBN: 9781529393484

Jamie by L.D. Lapinski

Jamie is happily non-binary, their parents, friends and teachers know all about it and everything's fine… except that soon they'll have to choose between a boy's school or a girl's school, either way leaving one of their friends behind. A sweet tale with simple language that can help explain the intricacies of gender to anyone.

ISBN: 9781510110922





Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus

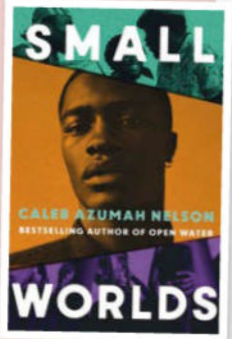
Elizabeth Zott is a chemist, the only female chemist in a world of men. When her life takes a swerve and she finds herself hosting a cookery show, she does it only on her terms – and inspires women everywhere to challenge the status quo. An extraordinary debut novel that is difficult to forget.

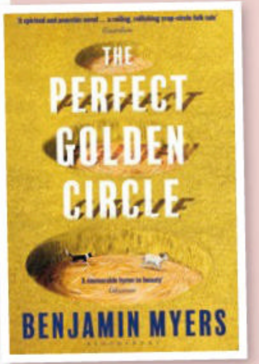
ISBN: 9781804990926

Small Worlds by Caleb Azumah Nelson

Over the course of three summers Stephen dances. He dances with his friends, with his band and at home alone to his father's records, uncovering the truths behind a man he thought he knew. This is a beautiful second novel from the award-winning author behind *Open Water.*

ISBN: 9780241574348





The Perfect Golden Circle by Benjamin Myers

It's the summer of 1989 and mysterious crop circles are appearing all over the Wiltshire countryside. To most they're a curiosity, but to Calvert and Redbone they're a labour of love. As their designs become ever more complex, the friendship between the two of them grows. Perfect for fans of The Detectorists.

ISBN: 9781526631428

The Last Party by Clare Mackintosh

On New Year's Eve Rhys throws an extravagant party and invites the entire village to help celebrate – but by the stroke of midnight his body is found floating in the lake. It's down to DC Ffion Morgan to investigate, but she's keeping her own secrets too… The start of a thrilling new series from the Queen of twists.

ISBN: 9780751577136

Clare Mackintosh
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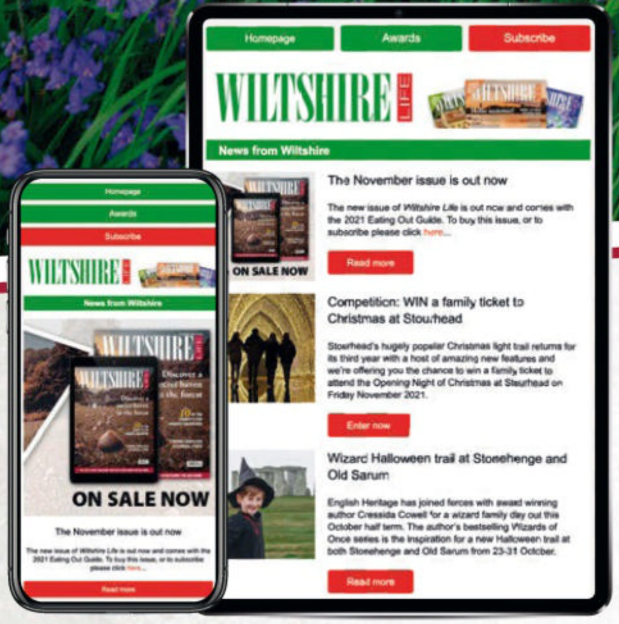

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Competition: WIN a family ticket to Christmas at Stourhead

Stourhead's hugely popular Christmas light trail returns for its third year with a host of amazing new features and we're offering you the chance to win a family ticket to attend the Opening Night of Christmas at Stourhead on Friday November 2021.

Enter now

Wizard Halloween trail at Stonehenge and Old Sarum

English Heritage has joined forces with award winning author Cressida Cowell for a wizard family day out this October half term. The author's bestselling Wizards of Once series is the inspiration for a new Halloween trail at both Stonehenge and Old Sarum from 23-31 October.

Read more

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It's not the wheels and cogs. It's not the steel we shape nor the gold we forge. It's not the sum of every single part that we design, craft, polish and assemble with countless skills and constant care. It's the time it takes. The numerous days and months that are necessary until we can print this single word on each individual dial leaving our workshops: ***"Superlative."*** It's the mark of our autonomy, responsibility and integrity. This is all we make, but we make it all. So that, in time, you can make it your own.

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